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January—March 1991

CONTENTS

P.P. MOHAPATRA/ Class conflict and agrarian regimes in Chotanagpur, 1860–1950	1
MUZAFFAR ALAM/ Eastern India in the eighteenth century 'crisis': Some evidence from Bihar	43
M. ATCHI REDDY/ Work and leisure: Daily working hours of agricultural labourers, Nellore district, 1860–1989	73
LUIS FILIPE F.R. THOMAZ/ Factions, interests and messianism: The politics of Portuguese expansions in the East, 1500–1521	97

Book Reviews

Amiya Kumar Bagchi, <i>The Presidency Banks and the India Economy: 1876–1914</i> by S. Ambirajan	111
Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds., <i>Dominance and State Power in Modern India, Volume 1</i> by Oliver Mendelshon	115
Ranajit Guha, ed., <i>Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society: Volumes V and VI</i> by Ramachandra Guha	116



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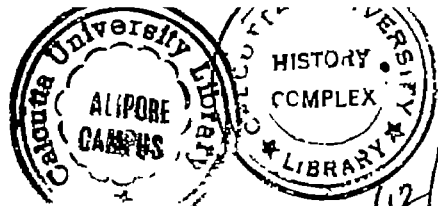
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The Indian Economic and Social History Review

Volume XXVIII

Number 2

April-June 1991

CONTENTS

D. RAJASEKHAR/ Famines and peasant mobility: Changing agrarian structure in Kurnool district of Andhra, 1870-1900	121
VERONIQUE BOUILLIER/ Growth and decay of a Kanphata Yogi monastery in south-west Nepal	151
RAVI VASUDEVAN/ The cultural space of a film narrative: Interpreting <i>Kismet</i> (Bombay Talkies, 1943)	171
SAMITA GUPTA/ Sris Chandra Chatterjee: The quest for a national architecture	187
Book Reviews	
V.B. Athreya, G. Djurfeldt and S. Lindberg, <i>Barriers Broken: Production Relations and Agrarian Change in Tamil Nadu</i> by Madhura Swaminathan	203
Jan Breman, <i>Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia</i> by Rana P. Behal	205
Michael Coulson, <i>Mālati Mādhavam</i> by Ashutosh Dayal Mathur	208
Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, <i>Life Among Indian Tribes: The autobiography of an anthropologist</i> by K.S. Singh	209
K. Chhleen Gough, <i>Rural Social Change in Southeast India, 1950s to 1970s</i> by T.K. Sundari	211
Ramachandra Guha, <i>The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya</i> by Jacques Pouchepadass	213
Zoya Hasan, <i>Dominance and Mobilisation: Rural Politics in Western Uttar Pradesh 1930-80</i> by Purnima Roy	217
M.R. Kantak, ed., <i>First Anglo-Maratha War: The Last Phase (1780-83)</i> by Sumit Guha	218
D.N. Maclean, <i>Religion and Society in Arab Sind</i> by André Wink	218
K.N. Panikkar, ed., <i>Peasant Protest and Revolts in Malabar</i> by K. Gopalankutty	220
Burton Stein, <i>Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire</i> by David Ludden	222
Nasir Tyabji, <i>The Small Industries Policy in India</i> by Tirthankar Roy	223
R.K. Saxena, <i>The Army of the Rajputs (A Study of 18th Century Rajputana)</i> by S. Inayet A. Zaidi	224



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The Indian Economic and Social History Review



Volume XXVIII

Number 3

July–September 1991

CONTENTS

OMKAR GOSWAMI and ASEEM SHRIVASTAVA/ <i>Commercialisation of Indian agriculture, 1900–1940: What do supply response functions say?</i>	229
SHEKHAR PATHAK/ <i>The begar abolition movement in British Kumaun</i>	261
TIM DYSON and ARUP MAHARATNA/ <i>Excess mortality during the Bengal Famine: A re-evaluation</i>	281
K.N. GANESH/ <i>Ownership and control of land in medieval Kerala: Janmam–kanam relations during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries</i>	299

Book Reviews

William Crooke, <i>A Glossary of North Indian Peasant Life</i> , ed., Shahid Amin, by Gyan Prakash	325
Daniel Gold, <i>The Lord as Guru: Hindi Sants in the North Indian Tradition</i> by Ravinder Kaur	327
Stephen Henningham, <i>A Great Estate and its Landlords in Colonial India: Darbhanga 1860–1942</i> by Peter Robb	328
R.P.T. Davenport–Hines, and Geoffrey Jones, eds., <i>British Business in Asia since 1860</i> by G. Balachandran	330
Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., <i>Democracy in Asia</i> by Niraja Gopal Jayal	332
R. K. Kanchan, <i>Hindu Kingdoms of South-East Asia</i> by Kunal Chakrabarti	333
Dirk H.A. Kolff, <i>Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450–1850</i> by Stewart Gordon	334
Baldev Raj Nayar, <i>India's Mixed Economy: The Role of Ideology and Interest in its Development</i> by P.N. Dhar	336
Paul B. Rich, <i>Race and Empire in British Politics</i> by Partha Sarathi Gupta	338
Amartya Sen, <i>Commodities and Capabilities and The Standard of Living</i> by Suresh Tendulkar	340

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The Indian Economic and Social History Review

Volume XXVIII

Number 4

October–December 1991



CONTENTS

DAVID BAKER/ State policy, the market economy, and tribal decline: The Central Provinces, 1861–1920	341
SUMIT GUHA/ Mortality decline in early twentieth century India: A preliminary enquiry	371
KESHABANANDA DAS/ Growth and decline of the mica mining industry in Nellore, 1911–1950	393
PAPIYA GHOSH/ The making of the Congress Muslim stereotype: Bihar, 1937–39	417
SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM/ A note on some early nineteenth century <i>inam</i> records in the Karnataka state archives	435
 Review Article	
KUNAL CHAKRABARTI/ <i>Kirtan</i> and social organisation in medieval Bengal	445
 Book Reviews	
D.W. Attwood and B.S. Baviskar, eds., <i>Who Shares? Co-operatives and Rural Development</i> , by M.N. Panini	463
Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, <i>Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India</i> , by Upinder Singh	465
Sandria B. Frietag, ed., <i>Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment 1800–1980</i> , by Radhika Singha	466
A.K. Jain and P. Visaria, eds., <i>Infant Mortality in India: Differentials and Determinants</i> , by Alaka M. Basu	469
Geetanjali Pandey, <i>Between Two Worlds: An Intellectual Biography of Premchand</i> by Vir Bharat Talwar	470
G. Rodgers, ed., <i>Population Growth and Poverty in Rural South Asia</i> by Alaka M. Basu	472
Manjit Singh, <i>The Political Economy of Unorganised Industry: A Study of the Labour Process</i> , by Tirthankar Roy	473
Book Notices	475
Index to Volume XXVIII	477

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Class conflict and agrarian regimes in Chotanagpur, 1860–1950

P.P. Mohapatra

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
New Delhi

The relationship between agrarian production (investment, productivity and growth) and the social context in which it takes place (state policy, agrarian power and class structure) has been of abiding interest for historians of colonial agriculture. There has been a noticeable shift in recent historiography from an exclusive emphasis on colonial policy, especially revenue policy, to a greater sensitivity to regional variations and the specific context of agrarian class and power structure and its impact on productivity and growth.¹ But there are problems in the definition and elaboration of the concept of power. Does power always prohibit growth? Or does it also stimulate growth in certain situations? How is power to be defined, quantified and measured?

Meghnad Desai has, in a recent paper, proposed an elegant method for quantifying agrarian class power, primarily by measuring it in terms of the proportion of the surplus above subsistence extracted by the dominant class from subordinate ones, i.e., landlords from tenants and agricultural labourers.² This proportion enables us to compare landlord power across space and time. But we also need to explain the variations in landlord power. Quite clearly, if power is measured by the surplus extracted we cannot explain the level of extraction in terms of power itself. Or else we end up with a tautology such as: 'Landlords are more powerful because they extract more surplus; they extract more surplus because they are more powerful'. One way of circumventing this circularity is to determine the surplus extractable under competitive conditions and then examine deviations above and below this level in terms of relative power and class conflict. The

¹ See for instance the collection of essays, Desai, Rudolph and Rudra ed., *Agrarian Power & Agricultural Productivity in South Asia*, Berkeley, 1984. Also Sugata Bose, *Agrarian Bengal Economy, Social Structure and Politics, 1919–1947*, Cambridge, 1986.

² M. Desai, 'Power and Agrarian Relations' in Rudra *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–198.

distribution of the surplus is, after all, a source of continuous conflict between classes. It is necessary, therefore, to study the shifting distribution of power and resources over both space and time.

This essay explores the interrelationship between class structure, class conflict and rate of surplus extraction in the Chotanagpur division during the colonial period. Chotanagpur, consisting of the five districts of Manbhum, Ranchi, Singhbhum, Hazaribagh and Palamau, was an administrative division of the province of Bengal (later Bihar). Like the rest of the province it was permanently settled, and the major form of surplus was the rent paid by the tenants to the landlords. Hence, until the end of the nineteenth century, rural society in Chotanagpur was dominated by the relationship between the two major classes of landlords and peasants.

The essay is in four parts. In the first section, the regional variation in the level of rent and the analysis of determinants of the rate of rent form the basis for our delineation of two agrarian regimes within the region. In the second section, we examine briefly the nature of class structure and various forms of customary rights at the end of the nineteenth century. In the third section, a detailed examination of the two agrarian regimes is undertaken to explain their characteristic differences, in terms of the interrelationship between class structure, class conflict and rent. Finally, we examine the effects of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, on the subsequent history of rent.

Agrarian Regimes in Chotanagpur

In Chotanagpur, throughout the nineteenth century, the major part of tenants' rent was paid in cash. In addition, there were various cesses in kind, and in many areas tenants were supposed to give a certain quantity of labour (*beth begari*) for the cultivation of the landlord's personal land (*bakast*), thatching or building his house and carrying his luggage on his travels. There were tenancies on which only cash rent was assessed and some for which only *beth begari* was taken. While cash and kind rents were assessed on the extent of cultivated land, labour dues were taken from households irrespective of the amount of cultivation. For most of the nineteenth century no reliable estimate of gross rental is available. It is only with the survey and settlement operations undertaken in the beginning of this century that the gross rental of each district became known. Under the settlement operations, kind rent and labour dues were commuted to cash at the prevailing price of produce and wages. Settlement officers also estimated rent as a share of the value of gross produce in the tenant's land. Table 1 gives the district-wise distribution of gross rental and share of rent in the value of agricultural produce.³

³ Cultivated land in Chotanagpur was divided broadly into *don*, the low lying land between the interfluvial ridges, on which rice was cultivated, and *tanr*, the upland on the sides of the

Table 1

Rental as Share of Gross Value of Produce: Chotanagpur 1902-25

<i>District</i>	<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>Gross Rental (cash + produce) '000 Rs.</i>	<i>Gross value of tenant's produce '000 Rs.</i>	<i>Share of rental to the gross value (in per cent)</i>
Ranchi	1902-10	774	14,993	5.2
Hazaribagh	1908-15	1337	10,739	12.5
Palamau	1913-20	950	4,841	19.6
Manbhum	1918-25	1339	22,763	5.9
Singhbhum				
Porahat	1900-03	80	2,240	3.6
Dhalbhum	1906-11	180	3,604	5.0
Kolhan	1913-18	252	7,233	3.5

Source: Calculated from respective settlement reports of the districts

- Note:** (1) Produce rent has been converted into cash on the assumption that it was always half the total produce. (*adh batai*)
 (2) The proportion of various kinds of land under tenancy is assumed to be the same as the total district proportion.

A distinct spatial pattern of the incidence of level of rent can be discerned. In Singhbhum, Manbhum and Ranchi, the share of gross rental was only 5 to 6 per cent of the value of the gross produce of the tenants' land. In Hazaribagh and Palamau, it was distinctly higher. The high level of rent of the latter two districts bears comparison with the adjoining districts of Bihar (Gaya and Shahbad) rather than with the rest of Chotanagpur.⁴

Apart from rent, a major portion of the landlords' income came from the land which they held directly. Various known as *bakast*, *majhihas*, *abad*, *zirat*, or *khas*, this was cultivated either by servants and forced labour (*begar*) or let out on very high produce rent. These lands were often the choicest rice lands of the village.

ridges mainly planted with millets, pulses and oilseeds. Each category of land was further subdivided into three classes, according to the level of productivity. The settlement officers estimated the gross produce of tenant's holdings by assigning a fixed ratio of yield of paddy for each class of land, determined by crop cutting experiments. For a detailed discussion on the estimation procedure adopted by Settlement Officers, see P.P. Mohapatra, *Aspects of Agrarian Economy of Chotanagpur 1880-1950*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1990 (hereafter, Mohapatra, 'Aspects..'), Chapter IV, Appendix.

⁴ In Shahbad and Gaya district adjoining the northern districts of Chotanagpur it was estimated that rent amounted to 12.5% of the value of the tenant's produce, in the last decades of the nineteenth century. See Rate Report of Palamau Government Estate in file titled *Palamau Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi.

Table 2

Proportion of Landlord's Bakast Don to Total Don Land

<i>District</i>	<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>Percentage of Bakast Don to Total Don</i>
Ranchi	1902-10	14.8
Hazaribagh	1908-15	15.6
Palamau	1913-20	30.06
Manbhum	1918-25	14.5
Singhbhum		
Porahat	1900-03	1.4
Dhalbhum	1906-11	6.1
Kohan	1913-18	—

Source: Calculated from the 'Goshwara' of respective SRs.

Table 2 shows a great disparity in the incidence of the landlord's *bakast* land between the districts. Even though the configuration is not as clear-cut as in the case of gross rental, in the extreme cases of Palamau and Singhbhum we can notice an association of the level of rental with the proportion of the landlord's *bakast*.

Determinants of rate of rent

What were the factors that determined the incidence of rent in Chotanagpur? As a working hypothesis we begin by assuming that the rent rate was determined by the competitive supply and demand for land. As an index of supply, we take the proportion of *bakast* land. The higher the proportion of *bakast*, the lower will be the proportion of the land left for tenants, and vice versa. Demand was reflected in the pressure of population on cultivated land. The greater the population pressure (population per acre of cultivated land) the higher was the demand for land.

To see how far the rate of rent is determined by supply and demand for land, the rate of rent, population pressure and proportion of *bakast* has been taken for seventy *thanas* of four districts of Palamau, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Manbhum, from their respective survey and settlement reports.⁵ The dependent variable is the rate of rent, calculated by taking the total rent of three classes of tenants (*kaemi* or settled tenants, *dakhlikar* or occupancy tenants and *gair dakhlikar* or non-occupancy tenants) on the total amount of *don* (riceland) in their possession. The rent rates are then deflated by the average price of rice in the district during the survey period, in order to make them comparable (since different districts were surveyed

⁵ The data for rent rate and *bakast* land for Singhbhum was available for estates, and not for *thanas*, for which reason Singhbhum had to be excluded.

during different periods of time). The independent variables, viz., population pressure and the proportion of *bakast* land, are calculated on the total *don* land of each *thana*.⁶

We then calculate the regression and correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix—70 thanas of Chotanagpur

	Rate of Rent	Population Pressure	Proportion of Bakast
Rate of rent	1.00	—	—
Population Pressure	0.74	1.00	—
Proportion of Bakast	0.72	0.44	1.00

We find a significant positive correlation between the rate of rent and population pressure as also with the proportion of *bakast* land.

$$Y = -0.638^* + 0.0419 X_1^* + 0.0360 X_2^*$$

(5.835) (7.104) (7.60)

$$R^2 = 0.735 \quad F \text{ statistic} = 96.51$$

* Significant at 1% level (Figures in bracket are the 't' statistic of the coefficients)

Y = Real rent per acre of *don* land

X₁ = *Bakast don*/Total *don* land

X₂ = Population/Total *don* land

From the regression equation, we find that the two independent variables together explain 73.5 per cent of the variation in the rate of rent. This suggests that there was a very strong relationship between the rate of rent and the indices of supply (*bakast*) and demand (population pressure), which seems to confirm the hypothesis regarding competitive determination of the rent rate. A different picture emerges, however, if the residual pattern of the regression is examined, the residuals being deviations of actual *thana* figures of rent from the estimated value. We find that there is a preponderance of negative residuals in the *thanas* of Ranchi and Manbhum districts, which indicates that the original hypothesis may not be valid for the whole region. The regression is then run separately for two groups of *thanas*: the first group consisting of twenty-seven *thanas* of Hazaribagh and Palamau, and the second group of forty-three *thanas* of Ranchi and Manbhum.

⁶ There being wide variation of productivity of various classes of land, all the indices (rent rate, population and *bakast*) have been calculated over only the *don* land. This makes them comparable.

For Palamau and Hazaribagh *thanas* the regression equation is:

$$Y = -0.5367^* + 0.05 X_1^* + 0.242 X_2^*$$

(3.066) (6.17) (3.7)

$$R^2 = 0.85 \quad F \text{ statistic} = 74.60$$

* Significant at 1% level

(Figures in brackets are the 't' statistic of the coefficients.)

There is evidently a stronger relationship between the rent rate and the independent variables for these *thanas* than for the whole region.

In the case of the forty-three *thanas* of Manbhum and Ranchi, the regression equation is:

$$Y = -0.466^* - 0.006 X_1^{**} + 0.029 X_2^{**}$$

(5.123) (1.36) (1.28)

$$R^2 = 0.101 \quad F \text{ statistic} = 2.26$$

* Significant at 1% level

** Not significant.

(Figures in the bracket represent 't' statistic of the coefficients.)

In contrast to the first group of *thanas*, here there is a very weak relationship between the independent variables and the rate of rent. Only about 10 per cent of the variation in rent is explained by the independent variables, and none of the regression coefficients are significant. It thus appears that the rent rate is largely determined in certain parts of our region by supply and demand for land as represented by proportion of *bakast* and population pressure respectively, while in other regions they have very little impact on the rent rate.

Two interrelated questions follow. First, under what conditions are landlords able to extract a high level of rent in some areas and not in others? Second, what were the differences in class relations due to which the same variables, viz., proportion of *bakast* land and the population pressure, have such different relations with the rate of rent? Two broad agrarian regions can be delineated, referred to as Region (I) and Region (II). Region (I) comprises the districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau in North Chotanagpur, while Region (II) comprises the southern districts of Ranchi and Manbhum.⁷

Certain a priori inferences can be drawn from the difference in the character of rent in these two Regions. Landlord's *bakast* can negatively determine the supply of land available to tenants only if the limits of the

⁷ It is clear that we must also include Singhbhum district in Region (II), because of the unusually low rent and low *bakast* land in this district. Geographical contiguity and similar ethnic composition of population also can be mentioned as reasons for including Singhbhum in this category.

arable frontier have been reached. Stagnation of arable is a necessary condition for the landlord's *bakast* land to strongly determine the rent rate. Moreover, for the full play of forces of supply and demand in determining the rent rate, the ability of the landlords to enhance rent, and to eject recalcitrant tenants etc., must be considered as near complete. Conversely, stronger persistence of custom or higher degree of peasant resistance and continuing expansion of arable would necessarily weaken the effect of supply and demand in determining the rate of rent.

Part of this *a priori* inference seems to have been justified in the differential character of arable expansion in Chotanagpur in the late nineteenth century. All available evidence suggests that in Palamau and Hazaribagh there was arable stagnation while in Ranchi, Manbhum and Singhbhum there was vigorous expansion of arable, during this period.⁸

Property Rights in Chotanagpur

As regards the character of property rights in Chotanagpur, T.S. Mcpherson wrote in 1905:

To comprehend rights and customs in Chotanagpur... the most important requisite is to discard completely all ideas of land tenure acquired in other parts of Bengal... the unit in Chotanagpur being frequently not individual tenants, but a community and the landlord being not owner of the soil, but merely receiver of a charge called 'rent' and having no direct relation with the cultivator.⁹

Mcpherson was only articulating the opinion of a considerable section of officialdom at the turn of the century, which held that beneath the legally recognised proprietary rights of *zamindars* and tenure holders granted to them during the Permanent Settlement, there existed in many areas of Chotanagpur much older customary and community rights over land. The locus of these rights was the village, and the origins of these rights were traced to the foundation of these villages through reclamation of the jungle. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, these village-based community and customary rights had been eroded to a great extent by incessant struggles with landlordism and the attendant concept of absolute property rights.¹⁰

⁸ For details of the differential experience of arable expansion in Chotanagpur, P.P. Mohapatra, 'Aspects...', *op. cit.*, Chapter III. In Chotanagpur, arable expansion in the late nineteenth century primarily meant expansion of *don* land.

⁹ *Final Report on Survey and Settlement Operation in Porahat Estate, 1905-07*, Calcutta, 1910, p. 14 (hereafter *Porahat SR*).

¹⁰ There was in fact a veritable discovery of the 'village community' at the turn of the century amongst officials. Father Hoffman, the pioneer anthropologist and missionary, and author of

The contrast between absolute property rights and the customary and community rights can be seen in two extreme types of village systems in Chotanagpur. At one end was the pure landlord's village with unfettered rights of the landlord over the wasteland and jungle, to enhance rent, settle tenants and collect *beth begari*. At the other end were the *khutkatti* villages found amongst the Munda tribesmen in Southern Ranchi.¹¹ Here the proprietorship of village land devolved jointly on all the patrilineal descendants of the founders of the village, who had exclusive rights over the village land, jungles and wasteland, gave no *beth begari* and paid only a nominal tribute to the superior overlords. They were represented in their secular affairs by the *Munda* or headman of the village, through whom the quit rent of all the *khutkattidars* was paid to the overlord. Between these polar type of villages there existed a variety of intermediate types, where joint co-parcenary property had been extinguished and only semblances of it remained in the form of residual customary rights of the descendants of original reclaimers as well as ordinary cultivators.

Variants of the *khutkatti* system were found amongst all pioneer tribes who reclaimed the jungle. In Ranchi district, in a large number of villages, the vestiges of this reclamatory system was to be found in the so-called *bhuinhari* villages.¹² The *bhuinhars* were the descendants of the original founders of the village and held a certain portion of village land rent-free, or on payment of a fixed amount of labour services. The rest of the village land was either held directly by the landlord (*manjihias*) or else, periodically enhancible rent was paid to the landlord (*Rajhas*). The most common village system in Chotanagpur was the *pradhani* or headman system, under which large areas of jungle in Manbhum and Singhbhum were cleared by various tribesmen.¹³ The headman (*pradhan* or *manjhi*) was the representative of the corporate village group consisting of a band of pioneers or their descendants. With the expansion of cultivation, new *raiya*s were settled and the total village rent was periodically adjusted. Here the villagers held equal rights in the cultivated waste and jungle land, and an equal voice in matters regarding the settlement of new tenants and granting of wasteland

Encyclopedia Mundarica, was an important influence. The typology of village communities and struggle over customary rights is discussed more fully in Mohapatra, 'Aspects...', *op. cit.*, Chapter V, Part II.

¹¹ The classic account of *khutkatti* system is to be found in *Encyclopedia Mundarica*, especially pp. 2390-2401. At the beginning of this century only 156 intact *khutkatti* villages survived in Ranchi. There were also 449 villages which were called broken *khutkatti* villages in which many features of *khutkatti* villages had been modified in the recent past. See also S.C. Roy, *Mundas and their country*, Calcutta, 1970, Chapter III for details of the system.

¹² The *bhuinhari* villages were spread over a large area of Ranchi district, mainly in the central plateau. In 1869, the *bhuinhari* commission appointed by the government had surveyed and demarcated 2482 villages in which the system prevailed.

¹³ For a classic account of the *pradhani* system see *Porahat SR*, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-129.

to reclaimers. The landlord had no direct relation with the village, which was represented by the headman in the payment of rent. Headmanship was often heritable and the landlord had no say in his appointment. During the course of the nineteenth century, there was a growing tendency towards the transformation of headmanship into a type of tenure under the landlord. This was facilitated by the growing practice of a remuneration for headmanship either in terms of a share of gross village rental or as a portion of rent free land. On other occasions, the landlord often succeeded in replacing the village headman by a temporary rent farmer (*thikadar*).

Even in landlord villages, ordinary rent paying cultivators enjoyed certain customary rights, such as customary usufructuary rights over jungle, and most important of all, the right to reclaim wasteland and jungle land at privileged rates of rent (*korkar* system).¹⁴ To recapitulate, first there were collective customary rights over wasteland and jungles and rights of reclamation. Second, the right to settle new tenants was often with the village community or its representative. Third, there were various types of privileged tenancies, the rents of which could not be enhanced. Finally, the landlord had no direct relation with the individual tenant. These features of customary rights restricted competition amongst tenants, checked the enhancement of rent, and constrained the full extension of property rights over vacant plots, abandoned holdings, wastelands and jungle. In other words, the social limit of surplus was often extended by the existence of a variety of customary rights whose locus was the village.¹⁵

But the distribution of various community forms of villages and the degree of exercise of customary rights were not uniform throughout Chotanagpur. As an index of the distribution of forms of village communities, we can take the number of customary tenures listed in the tenure's list of survey and settlement reports. These customary tenures consisted of various village tenures like, *khutkatti*, *bhuinhari*, *pradhani* and *ghatwali*. In Ranchi district, these tenures were to be found in about 40 per cent of villages. In Singhbhum 60 per cent of villages were held by the *pradhans*. In Manbhum, around 33 per cent of villages were held under various types of customary tenures. In contrast, in Palāmau only in fifty-five out of 3985 villages do we find the *pradhani* system. In Hazaribagh only 412 out of 7000 villages were

¹⁴ *Korkar* is derived from the Munda saying *Korkar bae Kaede*, (I have dug up the land by using a kudali). In this system the tenant was allowed to hold the newly reclaimed land rent-free for a certain period after which it was assessed at half the village rate. The strong notion of self-improvement inherent in this right indicates a close affinity to the pioneer reclamation rights which was the basis of all corporate community rights.

¹⁵ W. Kula, distinguishes the social limit of surplus from the technological limit, which is the maximum surplus that could be extracted within the technological constraint of an economic system without endangering its reproduction. The social limit is the actual level of surplus extraction governed by custom, W. Kula, *An Economic Theory of Feudal System*, London, 1976.

properly under the customary tenure of *pradhani*, and all of these were concentrated in the south eastern portion of the district.¹⁶

These disparities were associated primarily with the ethnic composition of the population. There was a close relation between tribal social organisations and the village land systems. This is best exemplified in the case of the Mundari *khutkatti* system where the clan system (*killi*), burial practices and ancestor worship were all intimately connected with the joint coparcenary property of the village. Individuals within the community were bound to each other as co-sharers of the land reclaimed by pioneer ancestors. Expulsion from the clan automatically disqualified one from holding property in the village.

The Census of 1872 showed a lower concentration of tribal population in the northern districts of Chotanagpur.¹⁷ This was due to the large scale movement of the tribal population, especially of the Santhals, from the northern borders of the division. This southward retreat of the Santhals was the cause of the rapid expansion of Santhal villages in *Damin-o-Koh* region of Santhal Pargana where, between 1830 and 1855, no fewer than 1500 villages were settled by the Santhals of Hazaribagh. Not until 1901 did the continuous retreat of tribals from the northern borders cease.¹⁸ This emigration took place due to the displacement of Santhal headmen by *thikadars* and other petty tenure holders from Bihar. In 1875, Hunter had noticed that the bulk of the tenure holders of Hazaribagh were natives of Bihar.¹⁹ With the retreat of tribes from the northern districts there was a continuous stream of immigrant settlers into these districts from adjoining Bihar.²⁰ Having been under the sway of landlordism in Bihar for much longer, these migrant peasants were less wont to challenge the claims

¹⁶ Calculated from list of tenures in *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Manbhum District, 1918-25*, Patna, 1928 (hereafter *Manbhum SR*), p. 50; *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Hazaribagh District, 1908-15*, Patna, 1917 (hereafter *Hazaribagh SR*), p. 85; and *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Palamau District 1913-20*, Patna, 1921 (hereafter *Palamau SR*), p. 109.

¹⁷ The 1872 census showed around 12 per cent tribal population in the northern districts compared to around 60 per cent in Ranchi and Singhbhum and 40 per cent in Manbhum. The 1901 census, in many respects more reliable, shows that Hazaribagh and Palamau had 25 per cent tribal population, Ranchi 60 per cent, Manbhum 45 per cent and Singhbhum 64 per cent.

¹⁸ Between 1851 and 1872, the Santhal population in *Damin-i-Koh* region of Santhal pargana increased by 125 per cent 'mainly due to immigration of Santhals from Hazaribagh'. W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, London, 1877 (hereafter *SAB*), Vol. XIV, p. 308. For the migration of Santhals between 1830 and 1855, see *Santhal Pargana District Gazetteer*, Patna 1965, pp. 70-72.

¹⁹ *SAB*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 65, 75.

²⁰ 'A continuous stream of Hindustani settlers from Bihar has for many years been passing into the district, through the passes in the hills that define the frontier to the north. Most of them are probably of low caste....' *SAB*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 59. In 1864, L.R. Forbes had noticed, the massive immigration of settlers into Palamau after 1830s. See *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Palamau Government Estates, 1864*, Calcutta, (n.d.), (hereafter *Palamau Govt. SR*), para 47

of absolute proprietary rights of the landlord. This partly explains the presence of weak village communities and their attendant features of customary rights in Hazaribagh and Palamau in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Agrarian Relations in Palamau, Hazaribagh: Region (I)

The distinctive features of the Northern districts was the heavy subinfeudation of property on the one hand and the wide prevalence of the system of rent farming (*thikadari*) on the other.

Table 4

Degree of Subinfeudation in Hazaribagh and Palamau

Districts	Total no. of villages	Total no of tenures	No. of first degree tenures	No. of second degree tenures	No. of third degree tenures	No. of fourth degree tenures
Hazaribagh	7,007	11,733	9,169	2,071	438	55
Palamau	3,599	14,893	8,263	4,708	1,573	318

Source : Hazaribagh SR p.85
Palamau SR p.109

The degree of subinfeudation was evidently more rampant in Palamau than in Hazaribagh. Palamau was ruled by a Chero chieftain, while Ramgarh, in Hazaribagh, was under a Kharwar chief. The granting of feudal tenures to military retainers and dependents had given rise to the first set of subinfeudation, well before the colonial era. These tenures were mainly of two kinds, *jagirs* and *khorphosh*. The former were grants to retainers and the latter to the younger branches of ruling families (since primogeniture was the rule in these areas). Another kind of land grant called *kush brit* tenures was given to Brahmins. Besides, there were independent chieftains who owed nominal suzerainty to the territorial chief, for example, the Bhuiya *ghatwals* of Khuruckdeah. At the beginning of the colonial era, it was found that most of the jagirdars etc., were virtually independent of the territorial chiefs.²¹

Drastic changes came about with the imposition of colonial rule. For the first time the fiefs and grants were treated as private property and assessed to revenue. The revenue assessments were not heavy in themselves, but they had the effect of transforming the tribute paying structures into rental property. Authority no longer came from grants by the territorial chiefs but from possession of property. This led to the creation of saleable intermediate property in the older grants which the *jagirdars* set about selling as

²¹ Hazaribagh SR, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

permanent leases (*mokararis*) either to the *mahajans* or to other middlemen. This became the basis of a second set of subinfeudation. In the process, large areas under the suzerainty of smaller, independent chieftains (Chero and Kharwar *khorphoshdars*) passed on to the hands of the new set of intermediate tenure holders. It was noted that 'Palamau's history of tenures was one of the secular decline of old clan chiefs of Cheros and Kharwars who were now gradually replaced by acts of resumption and *mokarari* leases by outside Babhans and Chattris as Jagirdars and tenure holders'.²²

Thus, two processes went on simultaneously: on the one hand, the creation of a large number of intermediate tenures through *mokarari* leases and, on the other, the gradual displacement of older chieftains who were linked by ties of kinship to the village communities. The new set of landlords were mostly imported from the plains of Bihar and proceeded ruthlessly to raise the level of rent and allied services from the cultivating classes.

Thikadari

Where landlords could not themselves carry out the task of rental collection or did not think it worthwhile to employ an elaborate establishment for this purpose, villages were sublet in temporary rent farming leases known as *thikas*. The *thikadar* emerged in the nineteenth century as the most visible symbol of the worst form of landlordism.

Table 5

Extent of Thikadari System in Palamau and Hazaribagh 1908-20

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Total Number of villages (excluding Khas villages)</i>	<i>Number of Thikadari villages</i>	<i>Percentage of Thikadari villages to total no. of villages</i>
Palamau	2859	1125	39
Hazaribagh	5407	2367	44
Total	8266	3492	40

Source : Palamau SR, p.109, Hazaribagh SR, p. 85.

Roughly 40 per cent of the villages had *thikadari* settlements. It must be remembered, though, that these *thika* settlements only refer to first degree tenures. That is, in these villages *thikadars* worked under only one superior landlord. But the true extent of *thikadari* can be gauged from the subinfeudation of second, third and fourth degree tenures in the district. Most of these tenures were usually given out in *thika* settlements of a temporary nature.

²² Palamau SR, *op. cit.*, p 23

Thikadari tenures were the surest and the least expensive method for raising the rental income of the landlord. It was the usual practice for *thikadars* to pay a year's rental as *salami*. Since the landlord's rental demand increased at the expiry of each lease (usually five years), the *thikadars* had very little margin if they collected only the legal rental. So 'the *thikadars* reimburse [d] themselves by enhancing rents all around.'²³

The effect of the *thikadari* on the gross rental of a village can be surmised from the example of village Matnag in Palamau district, where the gross rental grew from Rs. 115 in 1878 to Rs. 600 in 1911-17, without any increase in cultivation.²⁴

Bakast and Begari

Thikadars sometimes sublet their *thika* and often captured *raiya* land after ousting the older *raiya*s, claiming them as their *bakast*. These claims were sometimes based on the fiction that these lands were *manjhihas* or the headman's share. But the *bakast* was really established when new intermediaries displaced the traditional headman.²⁵

Bakast cultivation was a feature of almost all types of tenurial villages, as well as of the *khas* villages. In Palamau district, *bakast* cultivation had taken a form which did away altogether with the fictitious theory of headman's shares. Numerous instances of direct dispossession of *raiya*s from the holdings they had cleared was cited by the settlement officer. Thus, in Ursugi, Babu Kalicharan Singh, *Khorposhdar* under the Untari estate, claimed as *zirat* all the rice lands of one tola. It was found that this land had been reclaimed by Oraons who had only recently been dispossessed and given wasteland to reclaim in another tola.²⁶

The mode of cultivation of the *bakast* was broadly of two types. It was occasionally let out to tenants at a heavy produce rent (generally about 50 per cent of gross produce or often a fixed quantity of produce which was an even higher proportion). But more often *bakast* land was cultivated by *begari* or forced labour extracted from the tenants. *Begari* was most extensive in the northern districts, where *bakast* was a high proportion of the cultivated area. In Hunterganj and Partabpur *thana* of Chhatra where the amount of *bakast* land was roughly 45 per cent of the total cultivated area, 'the *raiya*s

²³ Inspection note of J. Reid on Palamau Settlement, 16 April 1916, *Palamau Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi, and *Hazaribagh SR*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²⁴ Note by T. W. Bridge, Enclosure nos. 51 A and 51 B, *Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers* (n.d.), pp. 151-161. According to Bridge's calculation the *thika* rental represented 30 per cent of the value of the gross produce of the tenants' holding.

²⁵ For instances of conversion of *raiya* land into *bakast* by *thikadars* see *Hazaribagh SR*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 91, 106, 107 and Memo. no. 1833 of J. D. Sifton dated 10 November 1911 in *Hazaribagh Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi.

²⁶ *Palamau SR*, *op. cit.*, p. 101

had to render almost unlimited *begari*, which is executed at critical moments in the season's agriculture.²⁷

Where the *bakast* land was let out on produce rent, *begari* did not serve any particular economic function, and remained only a symbol of the domination of the landlord.

Logic of Determination of Rent in Region (I)

In Palamau and Hazaribagh, the relative strength of the landlords against the village community was reflected in the level of surplus extracted from the *raiyat*'s holding. Private enhancements, made illegal by the tenancy law after 1901, were widespread all over Hazaribagh and Palamau. In Hazaribagh, in 212 out of 254 sample villages, enhancement of rent had been done after 1901. 'In the whole district probably less than 25 per cent of villages were paying only their legal rent'. Landlords could raise rents because of their ability to eject *raiyats* and resume *khas* possession of their holdings or re-settle them with other tenants who would pay up all arrears as a condition of settlement.²⁸ It is evident that in these conditions, the rent rate would be determined to a large extent by the supply and demand for land.

Table 6

Correlation Matrix — 27 thanas of Hazaribagh and Palamau

	Rate of rent (1)	Population pressure (2)	Proportion of <i>Bakast</i> land (3)
Rate of rent	1.00	—	—
Population pressure	0.800	1.00	—
Proportion of <i>Bakast</i> land	0.885	0.67	1.00

The correlation matrix of 27 *thanas* of Hazaribagh and Palamau show the strong positive correlation of both population pressure and proportion of *bakast* land with the rate of rent. However, partial correlations show that the proportion of *bakast* was a stronger factor in explaining the variation of rent than population pressure. If the population pressure was the same in all the *thanas*, variations in the proportion of *bakast* land alone would explain 50 per cent of the variation in the rent rate, while if the proportion of *bakast* land was the same in all the *thanas*, variations in population pressure alone would explain only 34 per cent of the variation in the rent rate.

Interestingly, there is a strong positive correlation between the proportion

²⁷ J D. Sifton, 'Note on Agrarian Conditions in the North West of Hazaribagh District' enclosure no. 17, *Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers*, p. 30. For instances of excessive *begari* associated with large *bakast* cultivation, *Hazaribagh SR. op. cit.*, p. 72. *Palamau SR. op. cit.*, p. 92 and *Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers, op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁸ *Hazaribagh SR. op. cit.*, p. 64.

of *bakast* land and population pressure. Since variations in population pressure (defined as population per unit of cultivated *don* land) would be negatively associated with the degree of arable expansion, its strong positive correlation with the proportion of *bakast* land suggests that a high proportion of *bakast* land was associated with arable stagnation. It can be further inferred that this was not due to a natural exhaustion of arable frontier; rather, the high rate of rent associated with a high proportion of landlord's *bakast* reacted negatively on the tendency for arable expansion. It follows from this that the high density of population on cultivated land, given the institutional barriers of high rent and high *bakast*, would lead to extremely pulverised *raiya*ti holdings. It is hardly surprising that the average size of *raiya*ti holdings in Region (I) was inversely correlated with the proportion of landlord's *bakast*.²⁹ In Region (I) then, high proportion of *bakast* associated with a high rate of rent militated against the enlargement of the tenant's holding. Conversely, with lower proportion of *bakast*, the rent rate did not rise high enough to inhibit expansion of tenant's holdings. In Hazaribagh the settlement officer delineated two distinct groups of *thanas* according to the degree of expansion of arable. In the nine *thanas* of south eastern Hazaribagh, where the rate of rent and proportion of *bakast* land was distinctly lower, there was evidence of continuing expansion of the arable frontier. These *thanas*, incidentally, also had a much larger proportion of tribal population and all the *pradhani* villages of the district were to be found here. But in the rest of the nine *thanas* in north western Hazaribagh, the combined effect of a high rate of rent and higher proportion of landlord's *bakast* had led to small sized tenant's holdings and absolute stagnation of the arable frontier, inspite of ample scope for expansion, given the high proportion of cultivable waste to be found in these *thanas*.³⁰ The delineation of the geographical division, merely indicated the working out of two contrary tendencies in the region. The expansionary tendency was associated with a lower degree of the landlord's control over the tenants while the regressive tendency was associated with much greater landlord power, an index of which was the much higher share of *bakast* cultivation.

The extreme form of this regressive tendency was found in the Chatra subdivision of Hazaribagh and in Palamau district. The settlement officer found that in Chatra subdivision roughly 30 per cent of the tenancies were only homestead or service tenancies (*gharbari* or *nokrana*); the holders of these tenancies being practically serfs of their masters. The villages here were held largely by a host of petty tenure holders like *mokararidars* and *thikadars*. Here the rates of rent were very much higher than the average rent of the district. Thus, half produce rent, which in other parts of Chotanagpur

²⁹ The correlation coefficient between the amount of *don* land per *khatan* of *raiya*ti tenancy and the proportion of *bakast* land was—0.861 for Hazaribagh and —0.942 for Palamau.

³⁰ Hazaribagh SR, *op. cit.*, pp. 16,17.

is the rate of rent payable for landlord's privileged land, in most villages here is the normal rent for all rice lands held by raiyats.' Eviction and seizure of cattle upon failure to render *begari* were extremely common. In Partabpur *thana* alone, it was estimated that *raiya*ts of 3000 acres (roughly 30 per cent of the total *thana* land) were ousted by the landlords. Consequently *bakast* lands were a very high proportion of the total cultivated area. This high proportion of the *bakast* land was cultivated mainly by a serf population, which was bound to the landlord by debt peonage. The whole *bhuinya* population, of this corner of the district had become *kamias*. Rackrenting, insecurity of tenancies and lawless exactions of landlords, were cited as the cause of the absolute degradation of the cultivating population.³¹

Again, about Palamau, John Reid wrote in 1916:

We cannot entirely reconstruct the rural annals of Palamau; but it is now well known that the imposition of very high rents exceeding one fifth of the value of produce has been the signal throughout the district for relinquishment of their holdings by the raiyats, and their degradation, in large number to the status of bondsmen or slaves.... The chief characteristic of agrarian conditions in Palamau, so far as I have been able to ascertain them are... arbitrary and huge enhancement of rent payable.... The results of these enhancements are wholesale dispossession of tenants without reference to courts, ... the complete dependence of the cultivating population, resumption of the lands of the tenants by the landlord, and the degradation of the tenantry in a large number to a state of serfdom.³²

Rent rates higher than 20 per cent, sometimes as high as 60 per cent of gross produce were quite commonly found in Palamau.³³ In the nine *thanas* of Palamau the intercorrelation matrix of the three variables of rent rate, proportion of *bakast* and population pressure show a much weaker intercorrelation than in the case of Hazaribagh. Though *bakast* land and rent rate have a fairly high correlation ($r = 0.79$) it is less than that observed in the case of Hazaribagh ($r = 0.95$). The relation between population pressure and rent rate is also much weaker ($r = 0.44$). Interestingly there is a very weak correlation ($r = 0.29$) between population pressure and

³¹ *Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers, op. cit.*, pp. 27-30

³² Letter from J. Reid to Board of Revenue, Bihar and Orissa, dated 13 April 1916 in 'Survey and Settlement of Palamau District', Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi. For numerous examples of the above features in Palamau see J. Reid, 'Inspection Note on Palamau Settlement' 16 March 1916 in the same file.

³³ *Palamau SR, op. cit.*, p. 86 and letter from T. W. Bridge to Director, Land Records, Bihar and Orissa, 6 April 1916, *Palamau Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi.

proportion of *bakast* land. The weak relationship here does not mean that the characteristics of Region(I) are absent here. On the contrary it points to the overwhelming determination of these characteristics by the level of 'rent'.

The weak association between population pressure and rent rate only indicates the relatively autonomous determination of the rate of rent. Similarly, in the case of *bakast* land it was not the high level of *bakast* which led to a high rate of rent, but the reverse, i.e., the excessive rental burden led to abandonment of holdings and resumption into *bakast*. Here the index of landlord's power was in his ability to levy a higher than normal (i.e., normal for the existing supply and demand for land) rate of rent, rather than in the amount of *bakast* land he held. So even in *thanas*, where the population pressure was low, the rate of rent was high. As to the cause of such high rates of rent, T.W. Bridge wrote:

The relative position of tenant and landlord is similar to that of the Toad and the Harrow... the incidence of rent has been controlled purely and simply by contract.³⁴

Such high rates of rent deterred the enlargement of tenant's holdings, and there was the curious situation of a large amount of cultivable land and sparse population density alongside high rates of rent on existing holdings. In fact, till the inception of survey and settlement, it was commonly supposed that in Palamau, given the sparse population, there must have been competition for *raiya*s which would necessarily have kept the rate of rent low.³⁵ The Survey and Settlement proceedings effectively demolished the so-called 'competition theory' by showing that instead of rents being low, they were the highest in the whole of Bihar and Orissa, and instead of large holdings for the *raiya*s, one out of every three agriculturists had been unable to get any land at all, while the rest, in the vast majority of cases had less than subsistence holdings.³⁶

Kamia System in Palamau

The argument that competition for tenants would necessarily lower the rate of rent, was flawed in so far as it did not take into account the possibility of *bakast* cultivation by bonded labourers (*kamiauti* system). The system of debt bondage, negated the competition for tenants given the sparse population density (calculated over total cultivable area).³⁷

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ This view was first enunciated by L. R. Forbes in 1864, which later became the stock argument of Palamau officials against Government intervention, *Palamau Govt. SR, op. cit.*, para 47 and *District Gazetteer of Palamau*, Calcutta, 1907, pp 130-135.

³⁶ *Palamau SR, op. cit.*, pp. 118-119

³⁷ The connection between sparsity of population and the *kamiauti* system was noticed by Hunter: '...the immigrant Hindu speculators from Bihar succeed like Eupatrides of

We can verify the structural interlinkage between high rate of rent and *bakast* cultivation through *kamiauti* as it existed at the turn of the century in Palamau. It is clear that the exceedingly high rate of rent (above 20 per cent of the value of gross produce) would lead to the periodic and large scale abandonment of cultivation. This would of necessity tend to increase the proportion of *bakast* cultivation. But if the *bakast* cultivation was to be carried out only by free wage labour, the profits would never be as much as its rental value. So it would be more rational to let out the *bakast*, which would lower the rate of rent. Thus here we see the rationale of tying down labour to abysmally low wages on the one hand and simultaneously keeping the rent rate high on the tenant's land. The possibility of *bakast* cultivation with sweated labour thus counteracts the possibility of the rate of rent falling below a certain limit because of abandonment of holdings by tenants.³⁸ The high rate of rent on the tenants holding on the other hand, makes it a potential source of *bakast* land, as well as a reservoir from which *kamia* labour could be recruited. The intermeshing of high rent and high *bakast* was thus made possible by the existence of a pool of *kamias*. The *kamia* population in Palamau during our period numbered 60,000 or so, or about 12 per cent of the total agricultural population and 35 per cent of agricultural labour and their families.

T.W. Bridge's exhaustive account of the *kamiauti* system, done after surveying 10,000 *kamias*, provides a fascinating source material for a history of the degrading system. For the moment, it would suffice to mention that *kamias* invariably entered into bondage ostensibly for contracting loans for their marriage expenses which on the average amounted to Rs. 17 per head of *kamia*. In return the *kamia* pledged his labour exclusively to the master, to work at a dole (*bani*) which amounted only to 2 to 3 *kutchas* seers of paddy (or about 1 standard *seer* of rice in the maximum) or other unhusked grains. He was not paid even this meagre dole on days when he was not employed. Bridge observed that the *kamia* and his dependents together found work for only 365 dole days, i.e., a family of five members managed only 365 *seers* of grains in a year. Their total family earnings from all sources were less than half the prescribed minimum of the famine code. No wonder then that the *kamia* could not ordinarily pay back his loan. And so bondage became hereditary.³⁹

early Athenian history and the Partisans of early Roman history, in making bonded slaves of lower classes by sheer power of money. This is an obvious means of securing cheap labour in a thinly populated country and it can be hardly doubted that the system was introduced by the moneyed Hindu settlers". *S&B. op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 112.

³⁸ As per marginal calculation, it would mean that the landlord tends to equalise the returns from the marginal unit of *bakast* land cultivated with *kamia* labour with the going rate of rent.

³⁹ T.W. Bridge, 'Report on *Kamiauti* System', Chapter II, *Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers*. Bridge also found that usually the *kamias* had to undergo prolonged

Two features need be mentioned about the *kamiauti* system. First, that most of the *kamia* owners were petty tenure holders, *thikadars* and big *raiyats*. The big landlords seldom operated their *bakast* with the *kamia*. For this they usually depended on the extensive *begari* given by the *raiyats*. Second, due to the prolonged persistence of the *kamiauti* system of labour, the wages of nominally free labour in Palamau were not very much different from the *kamia* dole.⁴⁰

The root cause of the *kamiauti* system was the severe agricultural involution which beset the district. High rates of rent and the excessive insecurity of tenancy prevented arable expansion. Thus on a stagnating arable, population pressure produced small parcels of tenant holdings, allied with an extremely skewed distribution. This vast pool of marginal holdings was a source both for the growing *bakast* cultivation as well as the *kamia* labour to cultivate it at sweated wages. *Kamiauti* in turn sustained not just the large *bakast* cultivation but also the high level of rent on the tenant's holding. At the turn of this century, large areas of Region I were caught up in this vicious cycle of stagnation and severe exploitation.

Class Struggle in Region (I)

We might here recall certain features that characterised the prevailing property relations in the region. First, we have suggested that most landlords had no historical or kinship ties with the local population, i.e., they were mostly outsiders from the plains of Bihar. They were, thus, less subject to customary checks and social pressure of ties of kinship with the tenant class. To that extent they were more prone to transgress the social limits of exploitation and destroy the customary barriers to surplus extraction posed by village communities. Conversely, wherever traces of community organisation of villages survived, there was a noticeable drop in the level of surplus. In Palamau it was often found that 'wherever cultivating *pradhans* existed, the rate of rent was never more than 7 to 10 per cent of the total produce'. As it happened, the community organisation of villages survived only among the tribal communities. In Palamau, 'in many of the jungly villages which were still in the hands of aboriginal *pradhans* the rents were comparatively low'.⁴¹

A second feature which characterised agrarian relations in the region was the muted level of resistance offered to the demands of landlords. During the settlement, officers were often surprised by the extent to which

starvation and lived for long stretches on one meal a day. Vehemently denying that the 'dole' the *kamia* gets could be a 'wage', he wrote, 'can there be any doubt that the grain dole is not a wage but a minimum 'feed' such as even a cow or *tattu* must get', *Ibid.*, p.105.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Palamau SR, op.cu.*, pp. 85,86.

the tenants acted against their own interest. Thus in many villages in the north western *thanas* of Hazaribagh it was found that:

The subjection of the tenants is so complete that during the present settlement they have in very many villages refused to claim their own *raiya* land and have declared at the dictation of the landlords that their lands are in the landlord's direct cultivation, that they themselves have no connection—with the agriculture of the village, and that their cattle are not plough cattle but are kept for draught purpose only. Similarly when rents have been illegally enhanced within the last few years, the whole body of tenants in villages have deposed falsely that rents paid by them now have been paid for generations past, and in cases where landlords neglected during the cadastral survey of last year to suppress the *raiya* possession of land in the villages, the *raiya*s so recorded have come forward by hundreds to declare that after *khanapuri* last year, they voluntarily relinquished their lands and hold them no longer.⁴²

Evidence of this kind could be multiplied, but it can only prove what is known already, viz., that tenant resistance to the landlord was not usual in these two districts. In this region, enhancements of rent, eviction of tenants from their holdings and resumption into *khas* of tenant land, were often done without reference to the court. Whereas in other districts, civil courts were forged as an instrument of oppression, in Palamau, it was precisely the lack of litigation and rent suits in courts which indicated the absolute power of landlords.⁴³

But there were regions within these districts where successful resistance by the tenantry had restricted the amount of surplus extraction. Thus, in Mahuadanr *thana* of Palamau, the *raiya*s, mostly Oraon Christians, had absolutely refused to render *begari* to the landlords; there were frequent clashes between the landlord and the tenants for rent, *rakumat* and jungle tax etc. The *raiya*s had successfully asserted their rights to make *korkar* against landlord opposition. As a result, rents were the lowest in the district as was the proportion of landlord's *bakast* land, while no *kamiauti* was to be found here.⁴⁴ The frequent disputes in Mahuadanr were in sharp contrast to the acquiescence of *raiya*s to landlord demands in the rest of the district.⁴⁵ The pockets of resistance in south eastern Hazaribagh and Mahuadanr in Palamau were mostly populated by

⁴² Hazaribagh SR, *op.cit.*, p. 58. For instances of peasant acquiescence to landlord power see also *Selections of Palamau Settlement Papers, op.cit.*, p. 58.

⁴³ *Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers, op.cit.*, p. 88. For Hazaribagh see Hazaribagh SR, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

⁴⁴ 'Korkar and tangkar or jungle cess in Tapa Chechari'. Enclosure no. 5, *Selection from Palamau Settlements Papers, op.cit.*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp: 88, 181.

tribals and had also retained the tribal village organisation. It is possible that ethnic homogeneity and the common village organisation facilitated resistance to the landlords. It has been asserted that the main reason for the lack of agrarian resistance amongst non-tribal peasants of the region was because 'they consist of heterogenous elements and are not capable of combination.'⁴⁶ Added to the ethnic and caste heterogeneity, it must be mentioned, was the sharp differentiation amongst peasants. The burden of landlord's demand for *begari* or rent fell heavily on lower caste and small peasants. It was noticeable 'that the superior Hindu *raiya*s, such as Brahmins, Babhans and Kayasthas in very few cases ever render any praedial services or give any equivalent for them to the landlord. Thus the people most likely to give lead to resistance have always been excused.'⁴⁷

Let me now summarise the findings regarding the agrarian relations of (Context I). First, we have a relatively weak village community organisation. Consequently, the absolute proprietary rights of landlords were more in evidence. Second, the rates of rent were largely competitive and contractual, being subject to pressures of supply of land (which was determined by the proportion of landlord's *bakast*) and demand for land (determined by the pressure of population). Third, the high rent and high *bakast* areas of the region were necessarily characterised by arable stagnation. Finally, the landlord's practice of raising rents, often above a threshold limit of 20 per cent of the value of the produce of the holdings, resulted in the highly regressive structure where the mutual effects of high rent and high *bakast* land were reinforced. A crucial link between these two structures was the system of debt-slavery or *kamiauti*.

Agrarian Relations in Region II

Manbhum—Peasant Resistance to Landlords

The situation in Manbhum presented a striking contrast to that of Palamau and Hazaribagh. Here there was no comparable invasion of landlords from the plains. Most of the landlords and tenure holders had emerged from the internal dissolution of village society. This had an effect on the level of surplus extraction. In the pre-colonial period, most of Manbhum was divided into kingdoms and chieftainships (very much like in Hazaribagh or Palamau as we have noted earlier, and also like Ranchi). In origin, most of these chieftains had emerged from the prolonged process of state-formation that had taken place prior to the colonial era amongst various tribes of the region. Though most of the chiefs claimed to be Rajput, Dalton had no doubt that they were very much marked by their tribal origin.⁴⁸ Their control

⁴⁶ Hazaribagh SR, *op cit.*, p.24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁸ SAB, *op cit.*, Vol. XVII, pp. 262, 321.

K.P. -1816

over subordinate chiefs and headmen was limited and in many cases they could only collect a nominal quit rent.⁴⁹ The British transformed many chiefs into *zamindars* and new intermediaries also emerged from among the holders of jungle clearing tenures created in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰

Subinfeudation also occurred in this period, creating a multitude of rights above the village. But unlike in Hazaribagh and Palamau, where such rights were quickly grabbed by *thikadars* from Bihar, in Manbhum it was from the ranks of the cultivating headmen and other big peasants that the bulk of the village level tenure holders arose. The proprietary rights over villages at fixed rent and heavy *salami*, sold by *zamindars* piece by piece were taken by this already substantial class of peasants. Thus in contrast to Hazaribagh and Palamau, where the buyers of intermediate tenures were usually landlords, in Manbhum, peasants were the majority.⁵¹

The evidence so far points not only to the weakness of the system of landlordism but also to a great degree of peasant penetration into the structure of tenurial property. It also indicates that the line of demarcation between rent-collecting 'proprietorship' and cultivating tenancy was blurred to a greater extent in Manbhum than elsewhere in Chotanagpur. In Hazaribagh and Palamau this line of demarcation ran through the whole agrarian society, separating not just two classes, but also two cultures, or, as the colonial administrators were fond of saying, two 'races'. But in Manbhum, wrote Hunter, 'it is impossible, to draw any line between cultivating tenures and cultivating *raiya*s, as the holders of many of these tenures were themselves cultivators'.⁵²

Level of Rent

What determined the rate of rent in the above scenario?

⁴⁹ For instance in Pachete estate in 1771, 2/3rds of the total of 1280 villages paid only a quit rent to the *zamindar*. In Barabhum, 64 out of 218 villages paid only a quit rent. *Manbhum SR*, *op.cit.*, p. 20, and *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Barabhum and Patkum Estates*, Patna, 1917, (hereafter *Barabhum SR*), p. 18.

⁵⁰ *SAB, op.cit.*, Vol. XVII, PP. 328-330.

⁵¹ Between 1880 and 1912, in Manbhum peasant buyers constituted 42 per cent of the total buyers of intermediate tenures. In contrast, in Palamau 84 per cent of buyers were *zamindars* and *mahajans* and only 13 per cent were *raiya*s. For details of the land market and social origin of buyers, see Mohapatra 'Aspects....', *op.cit.*, Ch. VIII, especially Table 8.7 and Table 8.8. cf also the preponderance of peasant and tribal holders of tenures in the 'Statement of Total Assets of the Estate of Matha, village by village', in *Selections of Manbhum Settlement Papers* (n.d.), pp. 100-102.

⁵² *SAB, op.cit.*, Vol. XVII, p. 332. The settlement officer wrote: 'In the case of cultivating tenancies, it was often very difficult to decide whether they should be recorded as tenures or as *raiya* tenancies', *Manbhum SR, op.cit.*, p. 56.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix: Manbhum district 1918-25

	Rate of Rent	Proportion of Bakast	Population Pressure
Rate of Rent	1.00		
Proportion of Bakast	0.09	1.00	
Population Pressure	0.800	0.318	1.00

We notice here a low positive correlation between the rate of rent and the proportion of *bakast* land. This implies that in Manbhum the role of *bakast*, either in the supply of land or in augmenting the power of the landlord, was not the same as in Hazaribagh and Palamau. The reason for this is that most of the *bakast* land was the personal cultivation of peasant tenure holders or represented the miniscule plots of *brahmottardars*. There were 37,473 tenures in Manbhum of which *brahmottar* and *debottar* accounted for 18,648. These were often smaller than ordinary *raiyati* holdings. The area recorded in the average *khatian* of *bakast* land was nearly the same as that of the average *raiyati khatian*.⁵³

Thus, though the proportion of *bakast* land to the total *don* land in Manbhum is the same as that in Hazaribagh, in its origin as well as in the composition of its occupants it differed completely from the latter district. In Hazaribagh the proportion of the *bakast* land was an index of landlord power; in Manbhum it was rather a sign of its dilution and weakness. Nor was *bakast* in Manbhum associated with *begari* or *kamiauti*.⁵⁴ The explanations for the lack of relation between *bakast* cultivation and rate of rent could be found in the interpenetration of the tenurial and tenancy structures. Many of the tenures were in fact *raiyati* holdings which were held at low rates of rent. Second, it is evident that the institution of *bakast* could not affect the rate of rent precisely because it did not impede the expansion of arable. Many of the tenurial leases and holdings were specifically linked to the ongoing process of arable expansion.

However, in many areas the natural limits of arable expansion had been reached, especially in the more open parts of southern and eastern Manbhum and in the Jharia coalfields. The opening of coalmines often put an abrupt end to the arable expansion; much potentially cultivable land being taken up by the mines. In such conditions, the demand for land as expressed by the population pressure tended to rise. This was most clearly reflected in the increasing restrictions being placed on the customary concessions given

⁵³ An average *raiyati* holding had 1.95 acre *don* land and 1.38 *tanr*. Average *bakast* holding had 2.01 acre *don* land and 1.3 acre *tanr*. Calculated from Goshwara of Manbhum SR, *op.cit*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67

for reclamation. The first sign of it was to be found in the replacement of the *jungle bari* leases by *nayabadi* leases for reclamation. In the beginning, the *nayabadi* leases were held by the tenants on a small quit rent for a period of 5 to 7 years after which they were assessed at the ordinary village rates (with 6 annas remission in a rupee given as *mehnatana*). With the 'gradual diminution of suitable land for reclamation and the growth of population, the allowance for *mehnatana* or expenses of reclamations... gradually decreased in some areas.'⁵⁵ We can, thus, infer that once the limits of arable were reached, alongside the rising demand for land, the value of the marginal unit of land also increased. This fact no doubt influenced the average rate of rent. As we can see from the correlation matrix (Table 7), the rate of rent is very strongly correlated with population pressure ($r = 0.8$).

It might appear that in Manbhum, economic forces of supply and demand had caused the rate of rent to find its true level of equilibrium, while in Hazaribagh and Palamau the extra-economic factor of landlord's power had distorted the rental market by creating an artificial scarcity of land (both by constraining arable expansion and by possessing a large proportion of village land as *bakast*). However, the definition of rights of landlords and tenants was an outcome of the struggle between the two classes. The market operated within this context, and the difference between Manbhum and Palamau or Hazaribagh lay in the outcome of that struggle.

Tenant-Landlord Conflict in Manbhum

In the 1870s we see the first signs of the tremendous struggle between landlords and tenants over the question of rent. In a context of rising foodgrain prices after the Famine of 1866, landlords, faced with the prospect of decreasing real income attempted to increase the rates of rent. The Deputy Commissioner of Manbhum noted the raging conflict between the two classes:

The contention now going on is simply a question of rents; for whilst the landlords on the one hand are endeavouring to raise the rents all around, this is strongly resisted by *raiyats*, who, although... pay very low rates of rent, refuse to have them adjusted, though there can be no doubt, but that they have benefited largely by the rise that has taken place of late years in the value of produce, in which the landlords consider they have a right to participate.⁵⁶

This conflict led to the murder of a *zamindar* in 1872, and serious attacks

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ Report of Col. E.A. Rowlatt on 'Relations between landlords and tenants in Manbhum district' in 'General Report on Administration of Chotanagpur division for the year 1872-73' GOB, (Genl), 94-96, November 1873

on other *zamindars*. It was during this time that the confrontation between the *zamindar* of Tundli and the Santhal *raiya*s over the question of enhancement of their customary rent and transgression of jungle rights occurred. At one point, the *zamindar* had to flee and take shelter in the neighbouring Jharia estate. The Government had to intervene and arrange a compromise between the two parties, guaranteeing the customary rates and jungle rights of the Santhal *raiya*s.⁵⁷ During the same period, the conflict between *ghatwals* of Barabhum and the Watson Zamindari Company which held the Patni rights there, rose to a pitch, because of the latter's attempts to raise the rent on excess *ghatwali* land in possession of the *ghatwals*. In spite of spending enormous sums on litigation, the European Zamindari Company failed to raise the rent or dispossess the traditional *ghatwals*. Though the company had bought many *ghatwali* rights they could not oust their original holders.⁵⁸

The overall result of the class struggle during the period 1870–1920 was summed up by the settlement officer as follows:

Apparently the landlords were worsted in the fight and except in a few villages, the rents remained unaltered..... The customary rights of *raiya*s over trees and jungles and new reclamations are well defined and universally recognised.... The landlords are in fact more or less helpless and have not got the power to be *jabardast* even if they like to be so. The attitude of tenants towards them is that of tolerance almost verging on indifference. The large number of... Bhumij and other refractory tenants who know how to combine amongst themselves and who make no bones about murder and manslaughter, have succeeded in establishing an ascendancy over landlords as far as it is possible for any body of tenants to do so.⁵⁹

This power of the peasantry was due to the survival of various forms of village community and ethnic homogeneity. The process of expansion of arable tended to weaken the power of the landlords and strengthen the hands of the class of reclaiming headmen and substantial peasants. The blurring of the edges of class distinction between landlords and tenants on

⁵⁷ For an account of the dispute between the landlord and the Santhal *raiya*s of Tundi, see GOB, *op.cit.*, Rev. (LR), 50–54, December 1871 and GOB, *op.cit.*, Rev. (LR), 1–7, Jan. 1881.

⁵⁸ J.D. Sifton, 'Note on need for settlement in Barabhum' in *Ranchi Survey and Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi. Several complaints were lodged by the Company asking for Government help in recovering arrears of dues from the recusant *ghatwals*. There was the case of *ghatwal* Rup Singh who successfully defied the attempts of the Company to dislodge him from the village even though his tenures had been bought up by the company. *Barabhum SR, op.cit.*, p. 26.

⁵⁹ *Manbhum SR, op.cit.*, p. 90.

the one hand and the lack of sharp ethnic and cultural differences between them on the other, also tended to weaken the degree of exploitation to a greater extent than in Hazaribagh and Palamau. Thus, the process of class formation and class struggle in Manbhum was an important variable in determining the level and rate of rent.

Tenant-Landlord Conflict in Ranchi

In Ranchi, the persistent struggle of the tribal peasantry against landlordism limited surplus extraction to a low level (1/18th of the gross produce). And here, the rate of rent was least affected either by the population pressure or by the proportion of landlord's *bakast*.

Table 8

Correlation Matrix: Ranchi District 1902-10

	<i>Rate of rent</i>	<i>Proportion of Bakast</i>	<i>Population Pressure</i>
Rate of rent	1.00		
Proportion of <i>Bakast</i>	-0.43	1.00	
Population Pressure	-0.13	-0.03	1.00

In fact here we find that the rate of rent is negatively correlated with both population pressure and the proportion of landlord's *bakast*. This is completely contrary to what we have seen in all other districts of the division. What was the cause of such wide discrepancy between the hypothetical determination of rent rate and the existing rent rate? The settlement officer had found that in Ranchi nothing like an accepted standard or 'pargana' rate of rent existed. He wrote:

...the rate of rent and *rakumats* varies enormously; its incidence depending on most part on the relative strength of the parties rather than on considerations of equity or value of tenancy.⁶⁰

The constant tussle between landlords and tenants often centred around the unit of rental assessment. In Ranchi, as also in Manbhum, the rent was usually assessed on customary units of measurements variously known as *anna*, *powa*, *khari*, *kunwa* for lowlands, and *kat* for uplands. The units of measurement varied so enormously between villages and also sometimes within the same village that the officials considered it to be purely notional unit having no relation to actual measurement.

⁶⁰ *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Ranchi District, 1902-1910*, Calcutta, 1912 (hereafter *Ranchi SR*), p. 78.

But these variations in the unit of measurement or rental assessment were not completely illogical. The Settlement Officer examining several such cases of variations wrote:

The great variations are not altogether due to the originally indeterminate character of the local units. A favourite method of illegal enhancement of rent in the district was to increase the nominal area of the holding and sue for arrears of rent on it. Where this has occurred, the tendency is for the area of local unit to contract. On the other hand, where land fit for reclamation are plentiful, the raiyats frequently add the newly reclaimed area to their existing tenancies and pay no additional rent for them. In this case the tendency is for the size of the local unit to expand.⁶¹

Even the largest landlord of the district, the Maharaja of Chotanagpur, complained bitterly about the tendency of the tenants to enlarge their holdings without his knowledge.⁶²

The persistence of customary notions about the unit of rental assessment and the conflict over it, reflected the widespread survival of features of village communities and of forms of customary tenures. These posed a serious obstacle to the absolute proprietary rights granted to landlords during the permanent settlement. These local level conflicts, which were endemic in Ranchi from the early nineteenth century, stemmed from the attempts of the landlords to short circuit the entrenched customary tenures like the *bhuinhari* system. According to this system a large portion of the village land was held rent-free (or on payment of nominal labour service) by the descendants of the founders of the village. In their bid to increase their control over the village land, landlords tried to limit the area of *bhuinhari* land and increase the area of ordinary rent-paying land (*rajhas*) or land under their direct control (*manjhihas*).

The favourite method adopted for the assault on these 'customary tenures' was the system of *thikadari*. Cuthbert dated the inception of the rent farming system to the year 1822 (the year of the coronation of Jagnath Shahdeo) when a new set of middle men were granted indiscriminate rent farming leases:

These men were Mussalmans, Sikhs and some other, who came to the

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶² 'Petition of Maharaja Pratap Udainath Shah Deo to the Lt. Governor of Bengal' dated 6 November GOB, *op.cit.*, Rev.(LR), 31, November 1892. A.T. Peppe, Manager, Chotanagpur Estate, and R.L. Verma, Manager, Wards and Encumbered Estate of Ranchi district, mention the constant 'encroachment' by tenants due to lack of measurement of exact area of their holdings. See 'Necessity of Survey and Settlement in Chotanagpur', *Ranchi Survey and Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi.

country as horse dealers, and shawl and brocade merchants, fetched enormous offers for their goods from the Nagvansi chiefs and obtained farms of villages instead of cash, of which the latter chief were always in want.... They proved their yoke to be galling indeed and made the very name *thikadar* in Chotanagpur infamous.⁶³

The acts of *thikadars* in dispossessing the traditional village headmen (*mundas* and *mankis*) in the *manki patti* areas of southern Ranchi had led to the massive 'Kol insurrection' of Mundas and other tribes in 1832. The colonial state had to intervene and restore the traditional rights of *mundas* and *mankis* in the *mankipatti* area, the seat of the insurrection. But the process of dispossession of *bhuinhari* land in the more open areas of the district continued unabated.

By the 1850s the *thika* system had been strengthened by the entry of *mahajans*, and merchants and had become well established in the central plateau. As an example take the village Chuchgoora in Bero *thana*, a *jagirdari* village inhabited mainly by Oraons.⁶⁴ The village was let out on *thikas* of three years from about the 1850s. A series of *thikadars* held the village and in one particular stretch from 1861 to 1864, Toorea Oraon, a *bhuinhar* of the *mahto khut*, held the village in *thika* on agreeing to pay an annual rent of Rs. 318 and 200 *kats* of paddy. The agreement was signed on a stamped paper and duly registered in the court at Ranchi. To meet the rental demand he had recourse to the professional *thikadar's* means. He dispossessed some of his *bhuinhar* brethren when they were absent from the plot or usurped the plot of a particular *bhuinhar*, who died without heir or took over the plot of land of another *bhuinhar* who died leaving only a minor as heir. These fields were then let out to *raiya*ts from outside the village or even to moneylenders. When inspite of this he failed to meet the demand he sold up half his *thika* lease on *katkena* to a Rajput, who now proceeded to do what Toorea could not do, i.e., remove the *pahnai*, and *bhutkheta* lands from the *bhuinhari* stock.⁶⁵ When inspite of all this he could not meet the demand, Toorea, after losing his *bhuinhari* land, deserted the village and died in another village, a broken man.

This example shows the extent to which the institution of *thikadari* had permeated the village system of the Ranchi district, as well as the failure of the new rent collecting hierarchy to co-opt the stratum of *bhuinhars* and

⁶³ Report of S.T. Cuthbert, Collector of Ramgarh cited in *Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers* (n.d.), p. 43.

⁶⁴ Information regarding this village given here is taken from the *tanaza* (disputes) and field records of *Bhuinhari* Survey, Basta No. 10, District Record Room, Ranchi.

⁶⁵ *Pahnai* was the rent free land held by the village priest who was usually the head of the *bhuinhari* lineage of the village. *Bhutkheta* and *dali katar* were land attached to village deities, held in common by *bhuinhars*.

traditional headmen of the villages. *Bhuinhar* or a tribal *thikadar*, thus, emerged as a contradiction in terms.

At the same time the attack on *bhuinhari* by the use of professional *thikadars* did not always prove successful for the landlord. Collective resistance and even counter-attacks on landlords were quite common particularly after the Mutiny of 1857. In 1859 the whole of Sonapur pargana was declared a disturbed area following attempts by Christian *bhuinhars* to regain the fields from which they were dispossessed by the landlords. In these attempts it seems the *bhuinhars* were largely successful. These 'nominal Christians of Sonapur, Bassia, Belkadi and Doesa, finally repossessed the lands claimed as *bhuinhari*, of which they had been deprived for periods ranging from 10 years to one or two generations.'⁶⁶

In many of these places the *bhuinhars*, especially the Christian *bhuinhars*, had stopped giving *begari* or forced labour. It is around this time that the idea of half the land of every village being *bhuinhari* gained hold over the *bhuinhars*.⁶⁷ In 1867, the influence of this 'idée fixée' could be seen in the village Talguri, where the *thikadar* of the village, Munaram Tewaree, had been absolutely unable to collect any rent for some time past. He could not execute the rent decrees. The officer sent to investigate the case, Mr. Oliphant, found that:

Chumroo (the headman) was in possession of the village, while the *zamindar* was unable to go within its limits for fear of his life except under the protection of my camp. Chumroo declined to receive any compromise saying he and other *bhuinhars* were entitled to half the land in the village and that they would have that quantity or none.⁶⁸

The agitation for *bhuinhari* land assumed a significant dimension partly due to its link with the German Lutheran Church and the missionaries. It was because of the success of the Christian converts in the law courts regarding *bhuinhari* land, that the impression spread that to become a Christian was a surer way to fight the landlord.⁶⁹ The movement for Christianity, thus, became intimately linked with the agitation on the land question.

⁶⁶ Report of Captain J.S. Davies, Spl. Asst Commissioner, Lohardagga to Captain E.T. Dalton Commissioner, Chotanagpur division dated 15 March 1859. GOB, *op.cit.*, Judl (Judl), 77-79, April 1859.

⁶⁷ 'A large and influential body of Christians have combined to re-establish themselves and their pagan brothers in the position that tradition describes them as holding more than 70 generations ago. They claim as their own, half the land in every village'. Letter of E.T. Dalton to H.L. Harrison, Secy Revenue Department, GOB, *op.cit.*, dated 17 August 1868 GOB, *op.cit.*, Rev. (LR), 48, November 1868.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, report of H.L. Oliphant cited by E.T. Dalton

⁶⁹ In 1855, Dalton mentioned the widespread belief that 'when the *kols* go to the court as Christians, they are more uniformly successful than those who have not changed their religions' See F. DeSa, *Crisis in Chotanagpur, 1889-90*, Bangalore, 1975, p. 81.

The demands raised by the Christians related not only to their fellow Christians; they represented tacitly if not overtly in the beginning, the demands of the whole tribe. In this connection, a significant step was taken under the leadership of Christian converts when a deputation of tribals went up to Calcutta to present a petition of 14,000 Christians to the Government, complaining against the landlord's oppression including exorbitant labour demands (*beth begari*) and encroachments on *bhuinhari* land. They also, for the first time, asked to pay their rent directly to the Government. On enquiry, Dalton reported that although the leading role in the deputation was played by Christian converts, most of those who were connected with the petition movement were 'pagan coles' or non-Christian tribesmen.⁷⁰ This was the beginning of the *Sardari Larai*, which shall be discussed shortly. It may be mentioned here that the missionaries were opposed to even the slightest political overtone given to the movement and had advised strongly against sending petitions to the Government.⁷¹ But it was due to the continued agitation and constant complaints of aggression and counter aggression that the government decided to enact a special law and commence the demarcation of the *bhuinhari* and *manjhihas* land in 1869.

The operation took eleven years and covered 2482 villages of the district. In total, 14,173 claims were instituted by both landlords and *bhuinhars*, of which 7363 claims were contested by either party.⁷² The outcome of the survey in most cases fell short of the expectation of *bhuinhars*, who had claimed all their holdings (including *rajhas*) as *bhuinhari*. Infact they sought to claim as *bhuinhari*, even holdings of which they had been dispossessed for more than seventy years. The landlords on the other hand, claimed the *bhuinhari* to be either *rajhas* or *manjhihas*. It was found that in many cases where *bhuinhars* were stronger they had forcibly possessed the land they claimed as *bhuinhari* and had ceased paying rent for it altogether.⁷³

The land which was, thus, not decreed *bhuinhari* but were in possession of the *bhuinhars* became a source of renewed conflict. The struggle between landlords and tenants now shifted to the *rajhas* land. And the question of rent and other services like *beth begari* and *rakumats* became the focus of the conflict during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, the agitation for *bhuinhari* had given way to a far more radical

⁷⁰ Correspondence regarding Petition of 14,000 Christians presented to GOB, *op.cit.*, Rev. (LR) 1867, 51-57.

⁷¹ F. DeSa, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

⁷² Calculated from Table appended to the 'Final completion report of operations under Chotanagpur Tenures Act (1869)'. *Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers*, p. 41.

⁷³ Letter of A.W.B. Power, D.C. Lohardagga, to the Commissioner of Chotanagpur division, dated 18 June 1880, in *Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers*, p. 33. The *bhuinhars* of Chuchgoora village had ceased payment of rent for all the lands claimed by them as *bhuinhari*. See deposition of 'Ajit Rae in Review case no. 3 of 1873/74, *tanaza* and field records of Chuchgoora village, Basta no. 10, District Records Room, Ranchi

demand put forward repeatedly in the petitions of the *sardars* to the Government of Bengal, Government of India, as well as the British Parliament. They opposed the Permanent Settlement and the proprietary rights of all the landlords including the Maharaja of Chotanagpur. They demanded instead that the Mundas and Oraons be allowed to form village communities and pay revenue directly to the Government.⁷⁴ The important differences between the *Sardari Larai* and the earlier *bhuinhari* agitations was the overtly political demand raised by the *sardars*. They claimed not just half the land of each village, as in the earlier agitation, but the whole land of Chotanagpur estate as theirs, on the basis of being the original settlers on the land. In one of their petitions in 1887, they stated:

Every nation has its own Government: Only we Mundas and Oraons have not. As every child inherits his father's rights so we wish to have the rights of our forefathers.⁷⁵

The idea of a 'raj' which would do away with the *zamindars* and *thikadars* and re-establish the glory of tribal power was the constant refrain of these petitions. By demanding direct payment of rent, the petitioning *sardars* were seeking recognition as peasant proprietors, which was, of course, repeatedly rejected by the Government. In spite of this rejection, in many areas of the district (mostly in south and south western Ranchi, in *thanas* Torpa, Bassia, Khunti and Tamar) the *sardari* villages stopped paying rent to the *zamindars*. They firmly believed that their rightful claims were already recognised by higher authorities, amongst whom they also counted the Queen Victoria.⁷⁶

The *sardars* were by now only nominally connected with the German Lutheran Church, which had, by the mid 1870s, assiduously distanced itself from their demands.⁷⁷ The estrangement of *sardars* from the mission led them to accuse the missionaries of having secreted away their 'decree'. One of the objects of the *sardari* agitation now was to induce their brethren

⁷⁴ The leaders of the petition movement were called *sardars*. The first mass petition was sent in 1867, while the next one of importance was sent in 1879 to the Commissioner of Chotanagpur, as well as the Lt. Governor of Bengal. This petition was summarily rejected in 1881. Regular petitions were sent again in 1884, 1885, 1886 and 1887. We have not been able to trace the contents of all the petitions.

⁷⁵ Petitions of *Sardars* to the General Conference of German Lutheran missionaries, cited by C.C. Stevens, Commissioner of Chotanagpur, in GOB, *op.cit.*, Judl. (Judl.), 12-14, January 1888.

⁷⁶ Letter of C.C. Stevens, GOB, Judl. (Judl.), 12-14, January 1888, para 23.

⁷⁷ The Annual report of the German mission for 1874, noted with displeasure the involvement of its flock and specially the 'elders' with the *Sardari Larai* which was then taking shape: 'All our efforts to convince them of their folly and prove to them the impossibility of their demands being ever fulfilled, have only served to alienate us'. Cited in SAB, *op.cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 436.

to abstain from attending the Church or allowing their children to go to the mission schools. The main emphasis at such meetings, held at various places of south and south western Ranchi in 1887, was to 'dispute the authority and to throw discredit on the local officers' as well as to seize the *manjhihas* land of the landlords and *thikadars*. They also refused to pay the rent to *zamindars* or perform labour services for them. It was believed that the *sardars* had sought permission from the Empress to fight the 'Sahebs for one and half day', during which the tribes of the whole country, 200 miles on each side, would take on the armed might of the British.⁷⁸

The colonial Government kept up its attempt to repress *Sardari Larai* by isolating its leaders and claiming that they had committed illegal acts of coercion and defrauded their followers. In 1887, C. Stevens, the Commissioner of the Chotanagpur division, could not find a single Munda or Oraon who admitted that any coercion had been used by *sardars*; the contributions were always voluntarily given. In 1893-94 the Government attempts succeeded when, with the active help of some missionaries and a few witnesses, they managed to prosecute the leaders of the movement.⁷⁹ But the movement continued till 1905 as is obvious from the anxiety with which the Government sought opinions from various quarters as to the cause of its persistence.⁸⁰

The importance of the *Sardari Larai* lay primarily in the creation of a political tradition, the basis of which was the demand for tribal autonomy. In the process, it articulated the first serious challenge to the concept of landlord property that lay at the basis of the Permanent Settlement. It, thus, elevated the local level struggles which otherwise would have remained trapped within the framework of 'agrarian disputes', to the political level and transformed the conflict of the villages into a struggle for power. It is this political tradition which the *ulgulan* of Birsa inherited and through it the autonomist *Jharkhand* movement of the twentieth century.

The spirit of the *Sardari Larai* affected the local village level conflicts over rent between landlords and tenants. In fact these local level conflicts were more widespread than the *Sardari Larai*, which tended to be confined largely to southern Ranchi. Information regarding these conflicts is not easy to get. It is mainly in the spate of litigation that came up in the 1880s following the enactment of the Chotanagpur Landlord's and Tenant's Procedures Act of 1879, that we get a glimpse of the intensity of the conflict at the village level.

⁷⁸ Letter of C.C. Stevens, GOB, Judl (Judl.), 12-14, Jan 1888, para 23.

⁷⁹ See *Annual Report on Administration of Chotanagpur Division* (hereafter ARAC) 1893-94, p. 64. Many of the *sardars* were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. In 1894-95 the *sardari* movement was still quite active, ARAC 1894-95, pp. 7, 65.

⁸⁰ E. Lister and F.A. Slacke, 'Report on Grievances of Mundaris of other than intact khutkatti villages' in *Ranchi Settlement Papers*, Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi.

Two factors seem to have aggravated the conflicts in the period after 1880. The first was the attempt by landlords to enhance the customary rates of rent; the second was the demand for *beth begari* which increased, often beyond the customary level. It had been observed by A.W.B. Power in 1880 that, 'It often happens that there are two rates of rent in a village; the old customary rent rate paid by the native cultivators and the contract rate paid by the new *raiya*s settled on vacated lands by the *illaqadar*'.⁸¹ The general tendency was for the landlords to try to enhance the customary rate and bring it to the level of the contract rate. The favourite means adopted by landlords was to sue for arrears of rent at the contract rate. This was not always successful.

Tenant resistance to landlord's demands for rent is seen in the number of applications made for deposit of rents. According to the provision of the Chotanagpur Tenants and Landlords Procedures Act 1879, the tenants could deposit the rent in the treasury in favour of the landlord, if the landlord refused to take it or did not grant a receipt for the same. The number of such applications kept increasing almost at the same rate as landlords instituted suits for recovery of arrears.

Table 9

Tenant-Landlord Conflict in the Law Courts Ranchi 1880-99

Year	I	II	Year	I	II
1880	570	1423	1890	1295	4895
1881	693	709	1891	1207	4315
1882	524	1069	1892	1260	5371
1883	696	1130	1893	—	—
1884	872	1306	1894	1226	4141
1885	—	—	1895	1080	4921
1886	937	1278	1896	1213	4472
1887	1094	2064	1897	1156	3963
1888	967	1937	1898	991	3075
1889	1116	3104	1899	1285	3158

Source: ⇨ *Report on Land Revenue Administration of Bengal* for relevant years.

Column I = Number of suits filed for recovery of arrears of rent by landlords.

Column II = No. of applications for deposit of rent by tenants

It was the usual practice for *raiya*s to deposit amounts of rent much lower than what was really due. This of course failed against zamindars who kept proper accounts. But many small *Zamindars* who were hard pressed for

⁸¹ Letter of A.W.B. Power to Commissioner Chotanagpur, dated 18 June 1880, in *Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers*, p. 34.

cash were, 'frequently found to have withdrawn the deposits....Having accepted the rents at the lower rate these landlords found it impossible to obtain decrees for higher rents.'⁸²

From 1885 onwards, a new wave of proselytisation swept Ranchi district. The earlier wave of proselytisation had received a setback in the mid 1870s after the German Lutheran mission as a matter of policy had disengaged itself from the landlord-tenant conflict. The new movement of proselytisation was the work of a remarkable Jesuit missionary, Father Constance Lievens. In a short spell of five years (1885-89), due to Lievens and his activist brand of proselytisation, no fewer than 70,000 tribals, mainly Mundas and Oraons, were received into the Roman Catholic Church.⁸³ The origin of this mass conversion movement lay in Lievens's initiative in helping the Mundas and Oraons in their court cases against landlords. Lievens used a unique method for conversion. He agreed to help the people in court cases if the whole village came over to the Roman Catholic Church. A written agreement was often taken from the villagers that if any one of them changed their mind a fine would be taken from the whole village.⁸⁴

The success of the Christians in the law courts had a great impact on the tribals, and made the proselytisation movement one of the most successful in the history of Christian missions in India. Although Lievens scrupulously avoided any contact with the *raj* movement or *Sardari Larai*, describing it like his Lutheran colleagues as a 'socialistic agitation', the idea of the *raj* often animated the actions of newly converted tribals. One of the major objects of these actions, was to refuse *beth begari* to the *zamindars*. Complaints and counter complaints were filed with the Government during the period 1885-90 regarding exorbitant demands of *beth begari* from Christians and the total refusal on their part to give any *beth begari* at all to the *zamindars*.⁸⁵

The movement towards Christianity, thus, became a part of the larger class struggle that raged during the period. Such a movement could not but get out of control of the missionaries as in fact happened in large parts of Western Ranchi during 1888-89. It was during this year that an alarm of rebellion and sedition was raised by the landlords and the Government felt compelled to act strongly.⁸⁶ Though it was later discovered that the fear

⁸² *Ranchi SR, op.cit.*, p. 101.

⁸³ In August 1885 the total number of Roman Catholic Christians was only 2092 and by 1891 there were 73,263 converts. F. De Sa, *op.cit.*, p. 319.

⁸⁴ Letter of Lievens to Provincial of the Belgian Mission, dated 22 November 1887, Torpa, cited in L. Clarysse, *Father Lievens—His Life and Times*, Ranchi, 1984, p. 204.

⁸⁵ Many of these complaints are cited by W. Maude in *Chotanagpur Agrarian Disputes*, Calcutta, 1891, Vol II, Appendix. See also the series of landlord's complaints cited by F. De Sa, *op.cit.*, pp. 189-200.

⁸⁶ See 'Open Letter of C. Lievens to Goethels, Archbishop of Calcutta dated 19 February 1890', cited by Clarysse, *op.cit.*, p. 348.

was exaggerated and partly engineered by the landlords, strong Government action put a stop to Jesuit involvement in the land question. Lievens, though vindicated by the Lieutenant Governor's own investigations in 1890 and cleared of all charges of inciting riots and rebellions, was removed from the Directorship of mission activity in Ranchi district.⁸⁷ Proselytisation too came to an abrupt halt. As the Jesuits scrupulously dissociated themselves from the 'land question' and ceased as a matter of policy to give help to converts in court cases, there was a mass desertion of tribals from the Roman Catholic Church.⁸⁸

In spite of this there was no abatement in the tide of law suits in the period after 1890. The Deputy Commissioner described the situation in 1891-92 as one of 'armed peace'.⁸⁹ In 1892-93, the reports speak of continued defiance of the Christians of *beth begari*. One source noted that 'the conversion to Christianity seems to have brought about a complete change in the minds of these people, and they now speak for total emancipation from the *beth begari* system.... As a result the authority of landlords is on the wane'.⁹⁰ The disputes between landlords and tenants continued throughout the year though there was no open manifestation of it as in 1889. There was a resurgence of *Sardari Larai* in 1893-94, in the Munda areas of Bano, Khunti and Tamar, which ended with the prosecution and conviction of leading *sardars*.⁹¹ But even in 1894-95, the *raj* movement had not entirely died down, and there was in fact an increase in the number of applications to deposit rent in the treasury.⁹²

The conflict between landlords and tenants had not taken any violent turn but the failure of the Government to legislate as promised in 1890, and the renewal of the *Sardari Larai* in 1894, pointed to a serious turn, which came about with the advent of the Birsa movement in 1895.⁹³

Class Struggle and Rent

We have shown that the period 1860-1900 in Ranchi was marked by continuous conflict between landlords and tenants. In our discussion we have referred to two levels at which the struggle took place. The local level of struggle was carried out in each village of the district by tenants, often led

⁸⁷ Lievens left India in 1892, disgraced and suffering from consumption. He died later in 1893 in Belgium at the age of 35.

⁸⁸ The statistics of the total number of Roman Catholic converts shows a steady decline after 1891. In 1891 as we noted earlier the total number of baptised and instructed (catechumens) were 73,263. It dwindled to 46,133 in 1894 and 33,000 in 1895. F. De Sa, *op.cit.*, p. 315.

⁸⁹ ARAC, *op.cit.*, 1891-92, pp. 11, 27.

⁹⁰ ARAC, *op.cit.*, 1892-93, p. 40.

⁹¹ ARAC, *op.cit.*, 1893-94, p. 60.

⁹² ARAC, *op.cit.*, 1894-95, p. 61.

⁹³ For details of the 'Birsa movement', from 1895 to 1900 see K.S. Singh *Hangung Mist and Dust Storms*, Calcutta, 1970.

by *bhuinhars* or Christian converts. These took the form of a refusal to pay the high rates of rent and *beth begari* demanded by landlords. Where landlords were extremely powerful, they could extract the high rent and *beth begari* by force, or they resorted successfully to the law courts and got their demands executed. But in case of smaller landlords and *thikadars* these demands could be successfully checkmated by a combination of *raiya*s. In the absence of fixed rates of rent and the lack of documentary support, the existing rates of rent tended to be purely 'customary'.⁹⁴ The curious thing about 'custom' was that it was amenable to force and counterforce. *Raiya*s could and did often successfully stick to the customary rates. Here 'custom' itself became a weapon against landlords. The same process could be seen in case of *beth begari* also. In the early period of *bhuinhari* agitation, the alleged custom *adha-kam adha-dam* ('half *beth begari* and half cash rent') had become the source for a demand from the *bhuinhars* that half the land in each village was theirs, for which they would only give *begari*. Later even this justification of *beth begari* was entirely dropped, and the *sardars* demanded full ownership of all the village land and the abolition of *beth begari*. Here the idea of 'collective property' was utilised to override the earlier custom of giving *begari* for the 'privileged' tenancies.

At the overtly political level, the struggle was not so much on individual grievances as for the establishment of an alternative notion of power, that flowed from the demand for restoration of collective community property and negation of landlord's claims to absolute property right. The 'raj' of the Mundas and Oraons was, thus, pitted against the 'raj' of the landlords and colonial officialdom.

However, it is futile to make too strict a distinction between the local, agrarian and economic level of conflict and the political struggle. The idea of 'raj' grew out of the opposition to the landlord's demand for rent and *beth begari*, while by rendering the basis of landlord's power illegitimate, the political struggle for 'raj' immensely strengthened tenant resistance at the local level.

The complementarity of the two levels at which the class conflict took place was often missed by the missionaries and the colonial state. The missionaries, especially, tried to limit the struggle to the agrarian and local grievances. The two waves of proselytisation in the 1860s and 1880s, led respectively by the Lutherans and the Jesuits, were triggered off by the efforts of missionaries to highlight the local level conflict over rent, *beth begari* and landlord's encroachment on *bhuinhari* land, and by their success in the law courts. Yet very soon the waves of proselytisation acquired

⁹⁴ It had been noted in 1890 that 'In most villages the *ryots* simply admit a rent of which they have acquired a knowledge from mere tradition, as the rent previously paid by their forefathers'. Note of Raicharan Ghose, Deputy Collector, Papers on *Chotanagpur Agrarian Disputes* Vol. II, p. 45.

dangerous political overtones in the shape of *bhuinhari* agitation and *Sardari Larai*. What the missionaries saw as an immense ground swell of conversion to Christianity was primarily the transition of disparate local level conflicts into widespread political agitation, which they had unwittingly catalysed. The Lutheran missionaries who had earlier had the bitter experience of seeing their good Christian folk rapidly joining the ranks of *bhuinhari* agitators and petitioning *Sardars*, predicted that it would take only seven years for the immensely successful proselytisation of the Jesuits in 1885 to be similarly infected by *sardarism*.⁹⁵ As it happened in 1892, the Jesuit conversion drive came to a grinding halt and Lievens had to return home having been accused of abetting a generalised rebellion.

Our discussion so far has been aimed at explaining two facts of agrarian class relations in Ranchi district: the relatively low level of rental and the lack of correspondence between the rate of rent and the economic determination of rent by competitive supply and demand for land. We have shown that the overall level of rental was low because of the fierce resistance put up by the tribal peasantry against attempts to enhance the customary rent rates. The persistence of customary rent rates and the outcome of conflict over it at the local level due to the variation in the balance of class forces explain the widely varying rates of rent found between even contiguous villages.⁹⁶

State Intervention and the Rent Question

The Tenancy Act of 1908

The immediate upshot of the Birsa insurrection of 1899–1900 was the making of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act. The various phases through which the Act came to be shaped and the pressures and counter–pressures that went into its making merit a separate study.⁹⁷ The main provisions related to: (a) protection of special tenures like *mundari khutkatti* and *bhuinhari* by making their sale for any purpose other than arrears of rent illegal and fixing their rents in perpetuity. *Mundari khutkattidars* were also granted proprietary rights over village jungles and wasteland; (b) granting of occupancy rights according to the custom of the country to the tenants, thereby limiting the arbitrary exactions of landlords, fixing the rent settled during the survey and settlement for a minimum period of fifteen years, abolition of *beth begari*

⁹⁵ Annual Report of the Gossner Mission of 1889 cited by F. De Sa, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

⁹⁶ For examples of such village level variation in rent rates related to the success or failure of resistance, see *Ranchi SR, op.cit.*, pp. 101, 102.

⁹⁷ See D. Röthmund and D.C. Wadhwa, ed., *Zamindar, Peasants and Mines*, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 69–85 for an analysis of tenancy legislation of Chotanagpur, especially the influence of various agrarian and legislative traditions of the colonial period on the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act

and commutation of all forms of kind rent; (c) making *raiya* rights inalienable under any circumstances excepting for arrears of rent; (d) finally, it gave considerable sanction to the existing custom regarding use of forest, occupancy rights, rights to reclaim land etc. The Act was designed to protect the interest of the tenant in the land against the landlord as well as to prevent alienation of the rights secured by the survey and settlement (Section 46). By the custom saving clause of the Act (Section 76) customary rights were strengthened and given statutory recognition.

But it is not to be imagined that the Act was an unqualified success for the tenants. It did not touch on the most crucial aspect of the agrarian agitation in Ranchi district, namely, the denial of proprietary rights of landlords. Instead it codified and limited those rights. In the making of the legislation, several concessions to landlords against tenants were granted, the most crucial being the *bakast* land. Unlike the Bhuinhari Act of 1869, which had given power to the Special Commissioners to restore land to the dispossessed *bhuinhars*, the Tenancy Act of 1908 in fact legalised illegal dispossession of tenants till the passing of the Act.⁹⁸ Second, it firmly established landlords' proprietary rights in extensive areas of wasteland and forests (though limited by customary rights of tenants); these areas had been a source of conflict between landlords and tenants throughout the late nineteenth century. But the imprecise nature of rights on wastelands and forests had often allowed considerable leeway for tenants to extend cultivation without the knowledge of landlords. In many areas forest land in the village was jointly managed by the village community. Though it gave usufructuary rights to tenants on these forests, the proprietary rights were granted to the landlord. Thus by codifying and legalising existing rights, the Act, in many cases, failed to take into account the historical evolution of these rights in a process of continuous class conflict. Nevertheless, the legislation was a recognition of the political importance of the tenantry. The pro-tenant tilt of the Tenancy Act dealt a serious blow to the existing structure of landlordism, by striking at the major source of landlord power, viz., the ability to exact and enhance rent in its various forms. It abolished *beth begari* and all other forms of kind rent were commuted and consolidated with the cash rent.

The Tenancy Act and Settlement operations had an invigorating impact on the process of arable expansion primarily in Palamau and Hazaribagh. Between the settlement period (1908–20) and 1950, rice land expanded by 42 per cent in Palamau and 35 per cent in Hazaribagh. But in the rest of

⁹⁸ A major concession to the landlords was granted in 1907, by legalising the *bakast* land which were acquired by the landlords in the years preceding the settlement. According to the provisions of the draft bill, the landlords' share of land was to be limited only to the *manjhihās* land recorded in 1869–80. This clause was dropped in 1907. Note by Mr. J. Kérr, 4 June 1908, GOI, LD, 33–36, June 1908.

Chotanagpur, it only grew 17 per cent after settlement. The difference in the rate and size of growth of arable in the two agrarian regimes is not surprising. In Hazaribagh and Palamau the high growth rates after the settlement only indicated the stagnation in the arable prior to it, induced by insecurity of tenancy, high rent and arbitrary ejections and enhancement. The tenancy act and the survey and settlement operations strengthened occupancy and customary rights and greatly limited the landlords' ability to increase rent and eject tenants. Once the incubus of high landlordism was removed, the peasantry responded to the already high population pressure by enlarging holdings and rapidly transforming poor quality uplands to rice land. In Manbhum, Ranchi and Singhbhum, the lower rate of expansion in the arable in the post-settlement period merely indicated the vigorous expansion that had taken place in these districts in the late nineteenth century. This was a measure of the successful resistance of the tribal peasantry against landlordism. In this agrarian context, the Tenancy Act, therefore, had far less impact on the course of arable expansion.

Decline of Rent in the Post-Tenancy Act Period

The Tenancy Act and the survey and settlement operations had an important and uniform (both over space and time) effect on the level of rent. It declined everywhere both in terms of its real value and also as a share of the gross value of tenant's produce. Rent as a major form of social surplus was threatened both by increasing peasant resistance as much as by the rising price level in the late nineteenth century. The Tenancy Act greatly accelerated this process. This coincided with the rapid rise of prices after 1905 which further eroded the real value of a stagnating nominal rent.

In Ranchi between 1910 and 1935, the gross rental remained practically static. In spite of a flat increase of 12½ per cent allowed in the rental (as well as a maximum of 50 per cent increase on specially low rented holdings) by the Government the share of rent as a proportion of gross value of tenant's produce declined from 5.2 per cent in 1910 to 3.3 per cent in 1935.¹⁰⁰ This was in spite of the exceptionally low prices of the depression years. The settlement officer of the revisional rent settlement of 1927–35, found that very few applications were filed by the landlords for settlement of rent on newly reclaimed land. Ejections and illegal enhancements had practically ceased. 'This was', the settlement officer thought, 'less due to the provisions

⁹⁹ For details of the history of arable expansion in the post settlement period see Mohapatra, 'Aspects...', *op cit.*, Ch. III.

¹⁰⁰ It appears that the final rental settled was about 19 per cent more than the attested rental (i.e., the rental paid before the settlement). Thus the actual rent paid before the settlement must have been a much lower proportion of the gross produce than the settlement figures suggest. See *Final Report on Revisional Survey and Settlement in Ranchi 1927–35*, Patna 1938, (hereafter *Ranchi Revisional SR*), Appendix.

of Chotanagpur Tenancy Act than to the supine attitude of landlords towards rent.¹⁰¹ The power of the landlord class was no doubt on the wane. The same trend was visible wherever rent resettlements were done. In Dhalbhum between 1906 and 1938, the share of rental had declined from 6 per cent to 3.25 per cent of the value of tenant produce.¹⁰² Similar figures are not available for other districts but the trend of secular decline of real value of rent and the stagnation of nominal rent is evident in case of Palamau, where the *bhujharat* proceedings held in 1955 showed that between 1920 and 1955, the gross rental of the district had increased only by 8 per cent (Rs. 8,10,000 to Rs. 8,73,000).¹⁰³ The steady decline in the real value of rental becomes glaring when viewed in the context of the considerable increase of arable (42 per cent) and massive increase of prices between 1920 and 1955.

In reaction to the stagnating nominal rent and decreasing real rent, landlords shifted to *salami* as a means of raising income. *Salami* was a premium which the landlord took for allowing a tenant to enter their waste or *bakast* land. It was mainly charged on the newly reclaimed land where reclamation required the landlord's permission. When taken on *bakast* land, *salami* represented the selling price of land. In essence the landlords, instead of organising production directly, chose to sell the assets they were granted during the settlement operations.¹⁰⁴ The settlement officer in Ranchi during 1927-35 had found that the supine attitude of landlords towards rent was largely due to the fact that they attached more importance to *salami* than to rent as a source of income.¹⁰⁵

Salami could provide an alternative source of income to landlords in a context of rising value of land and demand for land. But the shift to *salami* itself was a sign of the declining power of landlords and its adoption in turn further eroded their power. In Manbhum, tenant resistance to the rent offensive had made *salami* a regular practice much before the settlement itself. But in other districts, *salami* was distinctly a post-settlement phenomenon. It might be recalled that in the nineteenth century landlords usually took *salami* for granting intermediary tenures, but now as the rental value

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 56.

¹⁰² Calculated from Goshwara of *Final Report on Survey and Settlement of Dhalbhum Estate, 1906-11*, Calcutta, 1915 and *Final Report on Revisional Survey and Settlement of Dhalbhum, 1934-38*, Patna, 1940.

¹⁰³ The figure for Palamau is taken from *Palamau DG, op.cit.*, 1961, p. 356. Similarly in Ranchi, the total rent in 1956-1957 after the completion of *bhujharat* was reportedly Rs. 12,35,000, an increase of 8 per cent over 1927-1935. Figures for Ranchi also include the assessments done by the Government of all *kabil lagan* holdings through a supplementary *bhujharat*. *Ranchi DG, op.cit.*, 1970, p. 404.

¹⁰⁴ During the Revisional Settlement in Ranchi, the settlement officer could hardly find any instance of landlords reclaiming waste land, preferring instead to get *salami* by settling it with tenants. *Ranchi Revisional SR, op.cit.*, para 86

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 49

of tenures declined and the value of land increased, *salami* was mainly taken for selling *rai-yati* rights.

A major consequence of the shift from rent to *salami* was the absolute decline of the area of *bakast* land. In Ranchi between 1902–10 and the 1927–35 settlement, landlords settled 12 per cent of the total *bakast* land they held during the 1902–10 survey and settlement.¹⁰⁶ In the Dhanbad sub-division of Manbhum district the loss of *bakast* land between 1925 and 1955 (*bhujharat*) was about 22 per cent of the total *bakast* held in 1925.¹⁰⁷ The figures for loss of *bakast* land for other districts are not available. However, it is certain that this trend was present all through the division.

Thus, the stagnation in the rent rate and the falling value of rent led to the decline of the major source of income for the landlords. It did not lead to a consolidation of direct cultivation by landlords with hired labour. On the other hand the major reaction was to secure a short-term pecuniary gain by selling off and settling the land held directly under them with tenants.

Conclusion

We began our investigation into the class structure of the Chotanagpur region with the level of rent. The incidence of the rent and the factors that determined it provided the contours of the two agrarian regimes of the region. The difference between these two regimes was enormous. In the northern districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau, high landlordism reflected in the high level of rent and large proportion of *bakast* land had blocked the expansion of the arable. In the rest of Chotanagpur, arable expansion took place inspite of the landlords and was, to a great extent, a measure of the successful peasant resistance to them. The crucial variable in each case was the nature of class structure and the outcome of class conflict. They together marked out the arena in which the economic forces of supply and demand came to determine the rate of surplus extraction. The determination of rent rate in Hazaribagh and Manbhum illustrates these different contexts. In the former it was the landlord's power which provided the context for determination of rent rate by the supply and demand for land. In the latter it was the peasant ascendancy which shaped the context in which forces of supply and demand came into play. Ethnic homogeneity, persistence of community organisation, and the historical process of the evolution of property relations determined the relative strength of class forces. Colonial state intervention was often crucial in tilting the balance in this struggle. Rent as a major form of surplus declined from the beginning of this century due to the combined effect of peasant resistance, rapid inflation and the

¹⁰⁶ Calculated from *Goshwara of Ranchi SR, op.cit.*, and *Ranchi Revisional SR, op.cit.*

¹⁰⁷ Calculated from Table 5.5, D.C. Wadhwa, 'Zamindars and their Land' in Rothermund et al., *op.cit.*, p. 112.

protective provisions of the Tenancy Act. The steady decline of rent also marked the coeval diminution of the social weight of the landlord class. As rent absorbed a decreasing portion of the tenant's produce, other forms of social surplus came to predominate. These forms were historically linked to the penetration of market forces into the interstices of rural Chotanagpur. But that is another story.

Eastern India in the early eighteenth century 'crisis': Some evidence from Bihar

Muzaffar Alam

Centre for Historical Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

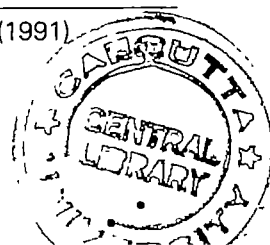
In recent years there has been a significant shift of emphasis in the study of eighteenth century India, from the high imperial government and administration to the regional economy and local social context of politics.¹ Scholars of the Mughal empire now have a far better understanding of the conditions that preceded and accompanied Mughal decline in Delhi and in the different parts of the empire, both independently and in their interactional context. One result of these recent studies is that the validity of explaining Mughal decline in purely economic terms is now open to serious doubts. Many South Asians support the contention of these studies that eighteenth century Indian history, of which Mughal decline evidently formed an important part, ought to be studied in its own idiom. What has, hence, emerged is a

¹ Some such notable attempts are the papers of Bernard Cohn, 'Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India: The Benaras Region', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 82, 3, 1962; Philip Calkins, 'The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal: 1700-1740', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 29, 4, 1970; Stewart Gordon, 'The Slow Conquest: Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire: 1720-1760', *Modern Asian Studies*, 11, 1, 1977; Frank Perlin, 'Of White Whale and Countrymen in the Eighteenth Century Maratha Deccan', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 5, 2, 1978; also see regional histories such as J.F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, Oxford, 1975, Richard Barnett, *North India Between Empires*, Berkeley, 1980, C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, Cambridge, 1983, and Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*, Cambridge, 1986.

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critique and a revision of many of the existing studies of Mughal politics and economy.²

However, the purpose of this paper is not as a response to either the positive or the negative reactions to these 'revisionist' studies. It is attempted here to examine some historical materials from yet another region, namely, the Mughal province of Bihar, to see if the questions posed in these studies, in general, and in my own earlier study of northern India, in particular, could help us comprehend better the history of other parts of Mughal India. Organised in three parts, these data try in the first place to see what early eighteenth century Bihar politics was like and how it interacted with developments at the Mughal court as well as with the general political and administrative problems of the empire in the period. Internal social turbulence has been examined in the second part, by way of delineating the local social context of this politics, while in the third part an effort has been made to understand the trends in revenue with a view to assessing the strength or weakness of the economy of the province. All this is clearly in keeping with the framework of my earlier studies of the period and it will be seen that many of the earlier conclusions seem to be reinforced here by the evidence from Bihar.

To leave matters at such a stage would amount though to disregarding a crucial aspect of the social history of the period, which, it is difficult to deny, was one of turmoil, even though in absolute terms there was little decline in material production and affluence. The question of how this turmoil was perceived and articulated by different social groups needs careful examination. The conclusion of this paper touches upon the relevance of a study of 'Mughal observations of Mughal decline', with a view to attempt it in some depth in the future. We begin, nowever, with the perspective of some of the chroniclers and littérateurs and the nature of early eighteenth century Bihar politics as it emerges from their observations.

I

In Mughal India in the provinces, the two principal officials, the *subadar* (governor) and the *diwan* (revenue and finance minister) and also some other important local functionaries, had fairly clearly defined spheres of power and authority. Accountable for their working directly to the imperial centre, they acted, in theory and in practice, as checks upon each other in

² See, for instance, the reviews of M. Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, Delhi, 1986 by Qeyamuddin Ahmad in *Indian Historical Review (IHR)*, 13, 1-2, 1986-87; S. Arasaratnam in *South Asia*, (New Series), 11, 1, 1988 and Marc Gaborieau in *Annales, Economies, Sociétés Civilisations*, 43, 6, 1988. For a dismissive reaction to some of these studies, see M. Athar Ali, 'Recent Theories of Eighteenth Century India', *IHR*, 13, 1-2, 1986-87, pp. 102-110.

the province. This classical pattern of governance and of the relations between the centre and the province underwent definite changes in parts of the Mughal empire in the early eighteenth century, both because of high Mughal politics and the disturbances at local levels in the province.³ Developments in Bihar also seem to have traversed a similar trajectory in the period.

Early in the eighteenth century some important steps, still within the classical framework, were taken in regard to the eastern provinces including Bihar. The grandson of the reigning Emperor Aurangzeb, Prince Muhammad Azim, who held Bengal, was also appointed *subadar* of Bihar in 1703, while Murshid Quli Khan, the *diwan* of Bengal, took over Bihar's revenue and financial departments.⁴ The new *subadar* and the *diwan* did not get along well; but the Prince nevertheless left a lasting impact on the cultural life of the province, its capital Patna being renamed after him as Azimabad.⁵ The Prince did lead some successful campaigns against rebel zamindars, but neither he nor the *diwan* Murshid Quli Khan could effect any change in the provincial administration before their return to the court. The Prince was recalled because Murshid Quli, who had earned laurels from the Emperor for his achievements in Bengal, did not want him to stay in the province,⁶ and also because his uncle, Prince Muhammed Azam reportedly instigated his transfer, possibly as part of his preparations for the fight for the throne following the imminent death of the ageing Emperor.⁷ But before Azim could reach the court, the Emperor died, and this was followed by the victory of his father, Bahadur Shah, in the ensuing civil war. Azim's treasure, collected in Bengal and Bihar, and his strategic moves contributed a great deal to the new Emperor's victory.

Prince Muhammad Azim, now Azim-ush-Shan, was the most powerful

³ M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 56-91; Richard Barnett, *North India*, pp. 17-23.

⁴ Syed Hasan Askari and Qeyamuddin Ahmad (eds.), *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, Vol. II, Part II, Patna, 1987, pp. 193-194.

⁵ Compare Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirat-us-Salatin Chaghta* (Kamwar), ed., Muzaffar Alam, Bombay, 1980, pp. 163, 185, 214, for instance, for references to Patna as Azimabad Patna.

⁶ Abdul Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan and His Times*, Dacca, 1963, pp. 19-22 for differences between the Prince and Murshid Quli Khan.

⁷ Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* (K.K.), K.D. Ahmad and Woseley Haig, eds., Bibl. Ind. Calcutta, 1868, K.K. II, p. 546. Murshid Quli Khan was not an Iranian, but was certainly in close association with the Iranians at the Mughal court (*Ma'asir-ul-Umara*, Persian text, III, for his services with Haji Shafi Isfahani and Haji Abdullah Khurasani; Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16). A factor in Prince Muhammad Azam's instigating Azim's transfer could have been Murshid Quli Khan's complaint communicated to Azam through his Iranian associates. Most of the eminent Iranians at Aurangzeb's court appear to be close to Azam. Asad Khan and Zulfikar Khan supported his cause during the struggle for succession in 1707. (W. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, reprint, Delhi, 1971, I, pp. 22-36). Father of Alivardi Khan, an Afshar who later rose to be the *nawab* of Bengal, was also in Azam's camp. K.K. Datta, *Alivardi Khan and His Times*, Calcutta, 1939, pp. 2-3.

person at the court of his father, Bahadur Shah (1707–12).⁸ The prince was again made the *subadar* of Bihar, but he stayed at the centre and his associate, Saiyid Husain Ali Khan, deputised for him in the province.⁹ Murshid Quli was recalled at the court, though, for a very brief period.¹⁰

Husain Ali Khan was certainly an able administrator, even though in his selection Azim-ush-Shan was principally motivated by considerations of dependability and loyalty. But the fact that he was a mere *naib* with no base in the province, imposed serious constraints in the effective discharge of his duties. Azim's son Farrukh Siyar, based in Dacca, also maintained a presence in Patna and often took the initiative in political and military matters,¹¹ to the obvious inconvenience of Saiyid Husain Ali Khan.¹² In 1712, when Bahadur Shah died, Prince Farrukh Siyar proclaimed his father, Azim-ush-Shan, as the new emperor without waiting for the outcome of the routine war of succession. Later, when he knew of his father's defeat and death in the civil war in Lahore he arranged for his own coronation. All this was arranged by the Prince at the advice of his favourites, namely, Khwaja Muhammad Asim, Qazi Shariatullah and Ahmad Beg, better known by their titles respectively as Khan-i-Dauran Samsam-ud-Daulah, Mir Jumla and Ghazi-ud-Din Ahmad Beg. Saiyid Husain Ali Khan resented both these acts, even though on the intervention of Farrukh Siyar's mother, he and his brother, Saiyid Abdullah Khan, the governor of the neighbouring province of Allahabad (the famous Saiyid brothers of our period) agreed to be the Prince's principal supporters in his bid to wrest the throne from his uncle, Jahandar Shah (1712–13).¹³

Farrukh Siyar, thus, acquired the throne in a situation fraught with possibilities for Bihar. Amongst the many who supported him included nobles like Husain Ali Khan, Samsam-ud-Daulah and Mir Jumla who had lived in Bihar and would continue to take interest in its politics and administration. On the other hand, it is also known that many decisions at the court of

⁸ Kamwar, *op. cit.*, ff. 314a and 318b for Azim-ush-Shan's office, *mansab* and influence, especially after the death of Bahadur Shah's *wazir*, Mun'im Khan in 1710. Azim was assigned the task of the office of the *wazir* and was thus at the centre of politics of the nobles and the other princes who aspired high positions including *wizarat*. Mirza Muhammad (MM), *Ibrat-nama*, Patna MS, Catalogue, vii, 623; ff. 68; Iradat Khan (?) *Tarikh-i-Mubaraknama*, Aligarh MS. 345/115f. (Mubarak), f. 46b; Munshi Ghulam Husain Tabatabai, *Siyar-ul-Mu'a'akhhirin* (Siyar), Lucknow, n.d., II, p. 382. See also Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707–1740*, Aligarh, 1959, pp. 53–55 and 64–67.

⁹ *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mulla*, National Library, Calcutta transcripts (Bahadur Shah), 27 September, 1708; Kamwar (Aligarh MS.), ff. 308a and 320a.

¹⁰ Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–29.

¹¹ Kamwar (cf. fn.5), p. 138, K.K., II, pp. 708–710.

¹² *Akhbarat* (Bahadur Shah), Sitamau Transcripts, 5th R.Y., p. 477; M.M., *op. cit.*, f. 14a.

¹³ K.K., II, pp. 710–711; Muhammad Ali Khan Ansari, *Bahr-ul-Mawwaj*, Patna MSS. 544 (Farsi no. 87), f. 214a.

Farrukh Siyar, including appointments to the governorship of provinces like Bihar, were to be compromises, in keeping with the plans and ambitions of one or the other of his supporters. The court was marred by intense rivalry among his nobles, and the Emperor, instead of keeping a distance, acted like a mere member of a faction.¹⁴

In 1712, just before Farrukh Siyar's accession to the throne, Nusrat Khan was the governor of Bihar. He was appointed by Jahandar Shah replacing Saiyid Husain Ali Khan, who still deputised for the deceased Prince Muhammad Azim. Nusrat Khan seems to have appreciated the necessity of reorganising the local administration. He is reported to have encouraged a certain Surat, son of Jagat, to mediate between the governor and the zamindars.¹⁵ Once Farrukh Siyar came to power, Nusrat Khan was, however, removed from Bihar. The new governor was Saiyid Ghairat Khan, a close relative of the Saiyid brothers.¹⁶ Ghairat Khan was, by any standards, an able administrator, but his appointment in Bihar was solely because of his links with the Saiyids. Still, his appointment guaranteed a measure of continuity from Saiyid Husain Ali Khan's time. But before Ghairat Khan could do anything, he too was transferred. Mir Jumla, a powerful leader of the faction opposed to the Saiyids, was the next governor.¹⁷

Mir Jumla was sent to Bihar, again in a bid to balance the claims and aspirations of the nobles at the centre. To appreciate this, it is necessary to look more carefully at the details of factional court politics. The Saiyids, who had planned by 1714 to be the supreme power, wished the court to be free from the influence of any noble close to the Emperor. Mir Jumla was then promoted by the Emperor to counter the growing power of the Saiyids. He was authorised to sign all papers on the Emperor's behalf. Unmindful of the regulations, he entertained proposals directly from officials and from candidates seeking positions and promotions, and set the seal and signature of the Emperor upon appointment letters (*parwanas* and *sanads*) by-passing the office of the *wazir*, Saiyid Abdullah Khan. Since the presence of Ghairat Khan—the Saiyids' man—in Bihar meant the strengthening of their hand, Mir Jumla was also made governor of Bengal and Bihar, initially with permission to stay at the court.¹⁸

The arrangement suited Mir Jumla, whose primary concern was to gain

¹⁴ W. Irvine, *op. cit.*, pp. 327–388; Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–167.

¹⁵ Khwaja Muhammad Khalil, *Tarikh-i-Shahanshahi*, Buhar MSS no. 79, National Library, Calcutta, f. 13a.

¹⁶ Kamwar (Aligarh MS) f. 346a.

¹⁷ M.M., *op. cit.*, f. 34b; Shivdas Lakhnawi, *Shahnama Munawwar Kalam*, Br. M. Or. 1898 and Asiatic Society Bengal MS., Ivanow 25/1/33 (Shivdas), ff. 5, 6b and 7a; Muhammad Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwal-ul-Khawaqin (Ahwal)*, Br. M. Add. 26, 244, ff. 106b–107a; Mubarak, f. 80b.

¹⁸ K.K. II, p. 739; Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108. Notably Saiyid Husain Ali Khan tried to retain the governorship even after the recall of Saiyid Ghairat Khan. According to

control over the offices and affairs of the centre; it also suited Murshid Quli Khan who had by then established himself firmly in Bengal.¹⁹ The Saiyid brothers' counter-moves, however, upset the calculations of the Emperor and Mir Jumla. Having lost hold over the eastern provinces, Saiyid Husain Ali Khan now secured the viceroyalty of the Deccan provinces, with a plan to rule there through his deputy, Daud Khan Panni, with whom he entered into an alliance stipulating a fixed annual revenue in return for freedom to Daud Khan in local administration.²⁰ This implied a weakening of the central authority *vis-à-vis* the Saiyids and their clients. But the Emperor could not logically object to it, since Mir Jumla had been allowed a similar arrangement with Murshid Quli Khan. As a measure of compromise then, Mir Jumla was asked to leave for Patna, while Saiyid Husain Ali Khan set off for the Deccan.²¹ Since the Emperor had promised Mir Jumla to recall him as soon as Saiyid Husain Ali Khan had left Delhi, the former proceeded slowly towards Patna. He also feared failing against a turbulent group of Bihar-based zamindars, the Ujjainiyas,²² and have his prospects for a high office at the centre, jeopardised. The Ujjainiyas, had already rocked the Bihar government. Mir Jumla arrived in Bihar in 1715 with some of the best available forces. But his Mughal army, instead of combating the dreaded rebel *zamindars* in the countryside, harassed the innocent residents and the traders of Patna.²³ According to plan, he did not stay long in the province. Sarbuland Khan became the next governor.

Thus, if on the one hand the centre, bedevilled with its own problems, had little time to attend to the difficulties of the Bihar administration, the governors and the other provincial administrators, on the other hand, always had their eyes directed at a position at the centre. Further, Bengal's relations with the centre had also begun steadily to lead to the 'hijacking'

Kamwar, Khan Zaman, succeeded Ghairat Khan before Mir Jumla's formal appointment. Kamwar (Aligarh MS) ff. 346; *Akhbarat* (Farrukh Siyar), 3rd R.Y., II, p. 38. The Saiyids, thus, appear to make up for their loss in the east by insisting to have the Deccan under Saiyid Husain Ali Khan's charge.

¹⁹ To Murshid Quli Khan, who had his own difficulties with the centre, a governor with lesser military and administrative skill was more acceptable. Mir Jumla was also related to Samsam-ud-Daulah. (Mir Jumla's brother, Sadiq Khan was married to Samsam's sister in Patna, *Risala-i-Khan-i-Dauran and Muhammad Shah*, Br. M. Or 180, f. 47b) and thus was, perhaps, more amenable to the *diwan* of Bengal.

²⁰ K.K. II, p. 739.

²¹ *Ahwal*, *op. cit.*, f. 106-107b; Shivdas, *op. cit.*, f. 5a.

²² M.M., *op. cit.*, f. 48a. Since Mir Jumla's principal concern was *wizarat* even later on his return from Patna, he clung to Delhi inspite of an order for his withdrawal to Lahore. M.M. *op. cit.*, f. 51b. See also S H. Askari, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1941, pp. 399 ff.

²³ *Ahwal*, *op. cit.*, f. 118a; Mubarak, f. 85b; Shivdas, *op. cit.*, ff. 7a and 8a. Since Mir Jumla had to rush back to Delhi, he disbanded the large army he had collected. The disaffected 'Mughals' and the *Jama'at-i-Hindustani* thus turned to the personal possessions and properties of the city dwellers. Shivdas, *op. cit.*, f. 6b.

of Bihar Government. This comes out more clearly in the Governorships of Sarbuland Khan and Fakhr-ud-Daulah.

Sarbuland Khan had governed Awadh and Allahabad efficiently, and his posting in Bihar promised a stable and strong government.²⁴ He handled the problems of the countryside deftly, encouraged new contracts with the zamindars and divested the *diwan* of all powers, so as to have full control over the finance and revenue departments.²⁵ Soon, however, he was also recalled to the court, again solely because of a new development at the centre. Farrukh Siyar, spoiling now for a showdown with the Saiyids, summoned him along with Ajit Singh and Nizam-ul-Mulk to Delhi. All of them were, however, won over by the Saiyids, whose unchallenged ascendancy was, once more, reflected, among other things, in the appointments in Bihar and correspondence with Murshid Quli Khan for an uninterrupted and secure flow of revenue to Delhi from Bengal.²⁶

Sarbuland Khan's brief tenure inaugurated a new pattern of provincial administration, as he showed interest in controlling, either by himself or through his associates, several important local offices including the *diwani* and *faujdaris*. Even if his immediate successor did not manage to rule with additional powers, the features of new *subadari* (governorship) or *nawabi* rule are unmistakable in the governorship of Fakhr-ud-Daulah. But before examining the difficulties of Fakhr-ud-Daulah's governorship, it is important to return briefly to the immediate aftermath of Sarbuland Khan's governorship.

Early in Muhammad Shah's reign (1720-48), and following the fall of the Saiyids, one of their senior kinsmen, Saiyid Nusrat Yar Khan²⁷ who rose to the high *mansab* (rank) of 7000/7000, was appointed governor of Bihar. His appointment, as a mark of compensation to the bruised self-esteem of the clan of the Barha Saiyids, was also in consideration of his staying neutral in the Battle of Hasanpur which eclipsed forever the position of the Saiyids in Mughal politics.²⁸ Nusrat Yar Khan who governed the province through

²⁴ Kamwar (Aligarh MS.), *op. cit.*, ff. 349b and 352b; *Akhbarat* (Farrukh Siyar), 5th R.Y., II, p. 152. For Sarbuland Khan's governorship in Awadh and Allahabad, see M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66, 95, 109, 110 and 259.

²⁵ *Comprehensive History of Bihar*, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²⁶ M.M., *op. cit.*, ff. 31a and 95a; *Siyar*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 411. According to Mubarak (f. 95a) the Emperor was advised to recall Sarbuland Khan also for consultations about the deteriorating administration and affairs of Bengal, which suggested the centre's strained relations with the province.

²⁷ Kamwar (Aligarh MS.), *op. cit.*, f. 355b, and 350a for his connection with the Saiyid Brothers; Kamwar, *op. cit.*, p. 323 for his support to the Emperor against the Saiyid Brothers.

²⁸ Muhammad Ali Khan Ansari, *Bahr-ul-Mawwaj*, (Patna MS No. 544 Farsi No. 87), f. 278a; *Idem*, *Tarikh-i-Muzaffari*, Aligarh MS. (Subbanallah 364/134), f. 176a for Saiyid Nusrat Yar Khan's *mansab* and titles. *Siyar*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 453; Kamwar, *op. cit.*, f. 380b for his deputy Abd-ur-Rahim Khan. Abd-ur-Rahim Khan had earlier deputised for Sarbuland Khan. Saiyid Muhammad Bilgrami, *Tabsirat-un-Nazrin*, (*Tabsira*), Aligarh MS. (*Farsiya Akhbar* 204), f. 65a.

his deputy, Abd-ur-Rahim Khan, died in 1723-4.²⁹ Thereafter, for about five years there was no governor in Bihar important enough to be recorded consistently in our sources. The author of *Siyar-ul-Muta' akhkhirin* did not know who succeeded Nusrat Yar Khan; he only knew that very probably in 1140 (1727-8) or a year before or after, Fakhr-ud-Daulah, brother of Roshan-ud-Daulah, obtained the *subadari* and held it for five years.³⁰ But it is likely that during these years Samsam-ud-Daulah, then the Mir Bakshi and a highly influential noble at the centre, virtually ruled Bihar through his henchmen.

Samsam-ud-Daulah had enjoyed a long association with Bengal and Bihar. His father, and his elder brother, the saint Khwaja Muhammad Qasim, lay buried in Bengal. For quite some time he himself looked after the management of this shrine and the *madad-i-ma'ash* (revenue free grant) attached to it.³¹ He was prominent among those who lived in Patna with Farrukh Siyar and accompanied him to Agra in 1712 to contest for the throne. More than one member of his family as well as his faction, figure in the early eighteenth century politics and administration of Bihar and Bengal where they also held a significant proportion of the total *jagirs* (revenue assignments). If not as a *subadar*, he certainly acted as a mediator between the centre and the administrators in Bengal and Orissa. Shuja-ud-Din, the deputy of Murshid Quli Khan in Orissa was, for all practical purposes, his protégé, for whom he secured Bengal and Orissa on Murshid Quli Khan's death in 1726, even though the latter had willed his grandson, Sarfaraz Khan to be his successor.³² Samsam-ud-Daulah seems to have manoeuvred to get him the *subadari* of Bihar as well. Shuja-ud-Din, however, secured Bihar only in 1733-34. To appreciate the factors because of which Samsam-ud-Daulah was unable to get Shuja-ud-Din the governorship of Bihar immediately after Murshid Quli's death, it would be necessary to focus attention on the political alignments at the court, together with some details of the administration in the province.

Early in the 1720s, after Nizam-ul-Mulk had given up the *wizarat* and left for the Deccan, a group of nobles under the leadership of Burhan-ul-Mulk, the governor of Awadh, Muizz-ud-Daulah Haider Quli Khan and Roshan-ud-Daulah Zafar Khan emerged as a powerful faction at the court. This group, except for a brief spell in 1726-27, generally acted in alliance with Samsam-ud-Daulah's faction. Among them Burhan-ul-Mulk, because of his marked success in Awadh, occupied a distinct position. He used his

²⁹ Kamwar (Aligarh MS.), *op. cit.*, f. 378a. When he died he held a rank of 7000/7000.

³⁰ K.K., II, p. 938; Kamwar, *op. cit.*, f. 379a; *Tarikh-i-Muzaffari*, f. 195b. Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashub, *Tarikh-i-Shahadat-i-Farrukh Siyar wa Julus-i-Muhammad Shah*, Patna MS. No. 2608, (Ashub), ff 54b.

³¹ *Haqiqat-i-Jagir Mansabdaran Waghairah Suba Bangala*, Berlin MS. Or. Oct. 209, Pertsch Catalogue No. 499. ff. 106; See also Z.U. Malik, *A Mughal Statesman of the Eighteenth Century*, Bombay, 1973, for some information about Samsam-ud-Daulah's career at the centre.

³² Ghulam Husain Salim, *Riyaz-us-Salatun*, ed., A.H. Abid, Bibl. Indic., Calcutta, 1890, p. 289; Munshi Salimullah, *Tarikh-i-Bangala*, ed., S.M. Imamuddin, Dacca, 1979, pp. 94-95, see also K.K. Datta, *op. cit.*, pp 7-8.

position to influence the appointments in the provinces, particularly in Allahabad and Bihar, both being in the neighbourhood of Awadh.³³ He got Bihar, first, for Aqidat Khan, and then for Roshan-ud-Daulah's brother, Fakhr-ud-Daulah.

Fakhr-ud-Daulah followed the example of Burhan-ul-Mulk. He dealt with refractory *zamindars* sternly, but in the campaigns against them he managed to secure the support from one group within the class of *zamindars* itself. Since Sarbuland Khan's immediate successors had rarely been able to collect tributes from the *ghatwals* of Palamau and Chotanagpur, he invaded the area in 1730. He also led expeditions against the Ujjainiyas of Jagdishpur (in Shahabad) with an army which included the local militia of Horil Singh of Mathila, Pahlwan Singh of Nokha and Tribhuwan Singh of Tikari.³⁴ He also further promoted and encouraged new arrangements (*ta'ahhud*) which had already been initiated earlier, with the *zamindars* in general, and while doing so, insisted on dealing directly with them or on choosing the mediator himself.

Fakhr-ud-Daulah also tried to reorganise and control the *jagir* administration in the province. A *jagir* in the Mughal system implied a right over revenue in a district or districts of the empire assigned to an official against his pay claim, and calculated according to the numerical value of his *mansab*. The responsibility of collecting the revenue was with the official, which he performed with the help of his own agents (*amils* and *gumashtas*) in his *jagir* districts. The *jagir* was ordinarily transferable and was assigned in an area alien to the *jagirdar* (assignee). The *jagirdar* was seen as an agent of the central government and was not supposed to have or develop permanent links with his *jagir* lands. They could, however, choose local men as their agents. Also, as exceptions to the rule, many indigenous *zamindars* and chiefs held their *jagirs* within their *zamindari* territories, while many retired and disabled officials or their dependants were awarded *jagirs* on a permanent basis to reinforce the empire at local levels.³⁵

In the early eighteenth century, when widespread disturbances in the countryside dislocated the *jagirs*, the *jagir*-holders, particularly the Indians, endeavoured to have their *jagirs* in or around their home towns or, at least, in places where they had postings at that time. Those based at the centre or at some distance from the assignment preferred to hold them on a permanent basis or, at least, for a long period. With this, they thought they would have some links with the local people, be able to mobilise them and, thus, would be in a better position to meet the threat from the *zamindars*. Since the Mughals were no longer powerful enough to guarantee security to

³³ M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 243–245.

³⁴ Q. Ahmad, 'A Historical Account of Chotanagpur in the 18th Century by Raja Shitab Rai', *Journal of Historical Research*, Ranchi, 3, 1, 1960, pp. 1–13; R.N. Prasad, *History of Bhojpur, 1332–1860*, Patna, 1987, p. 102.

³⁵ M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 78–80.

their local officials, they bowed to their demands, even if it implied a scaling down of the power and authority of the centre. The modified *jagir* came to prevail in almost the whole of north India. In Bihar, for instance, Khwaja Lutfullah Sadiq, Sher Afgan Khan, Samsam-ud-Daulah, Raja Muhkam Singh and Ismail Quli Khan, all held their *jagirs* initially for a long term and eventually, almost hereditarily.³⁶

This development was, however, to the obvious inconvenience of the governors who sought wide powers to turn their provinces eventually into principalities of their own. In Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan tried to convert the entire province into *khalisa* (crown land). Besides the conditional (*mashrut*) *jagirs* of the local officials, he allowed only a few outsiders.³⁷ Murshid Quli Khan began to do this late in Aurangzeb's reign and legitimised his action by an imperial order, which still carried weight. Further, his action caused no real loss to the outsider *jagirdars*, as he adjusted their *jagirs* in Orissa which was also under his control. In the 1720s, Burhan-ul-Mulk, who had only Awadh in his governorship, could not abolish the *jagirs* but he minimized outside interference by bringing all *jagirs*, and the *amils* of the *jagirdars*, under his direct jurisdiction. This has been characterised as an *ijara* (tax-farming) arrangement.³⁸

In Bihar a very large part of the revenue was assigned in *jagirs*. According to a revenue roll of Muhammad Shah's time only Rs. 6,63,717/13¼ out of the estimated revenue of Rs. 95,61,622/2 (*jama*) were in *khalisa*; the remaining Rs. 88,97,905/1¼ were assigned in *jagirs* to sixty-six officials³⁹ posted both inside and outside the province. Any drastic change, like the one of Murshid Quli Khan, in such a situation would have antagonised a very substantial number of important nobles. The act would have been self-defeating, in particular when the governors—as we have seen—needed a strong lobby at the centre. Fakhr-ud-Daulah thus initiated in the twelfth regnal year of Muhammad Shah (1731–2) a process similar to the one in Awadh, in order finally to have for himself the *ijara* of the entire province. But before he could complete the process, he lost the *subadari*.

As Fakhr-ud-Daulah tried to strengthen his position by acquiring the whole province on *ijara*, he came into conflict with the powerful erstwhile Mughal tax-farmers and the intermediaries. Among them was one Shaikh Abdullah who had emerged as a key figure in the Bihar *suba* administration, having often enjoyed the position of a *naib* (deputy and representative) or

³⁶ M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–130. See also I.O. 4452 for references to *jagirs* in Bihar.

³⁷ Philip Calkins, 'The Revenue Administration in Bengal', (mimeographed). However, the view that Murshid Quli Khan converted Bengal entirely into *khalisa* needs reconsideration. Over the *jagirs* he seems to have evolved a pattern of control, different from the one Burhan-ul-Mulk, for instance, tried in Awadh.

³⁸ Sayyid Ghulam Ali Khan Naqawi, *Imad-us-Sa'adat*, Lucknow (n.d.), p. 8.

³⁹ I.O. 4503.

the sole *muta'ahhid* (contractor on behalf) of the governor. He was thus in touch with the *zamindars* and the martial group commanders (*jama'a-dars*) and headed a large brigade of the local militia. Khwaja Mutasim, brother of Samsam-ud-Daulah, was the second such magnate in Patna, who pretended to live like a mendicant but was alleged to be the ruler of the province in actuality. Nobody, not even the emperor, could have restrained his influence, even though his presence was a grave threat to the authority of the governor. Shaikh Abdullah and Khwaja Mutasim often acted in unison.⁴⁰ Fakhr-ud-Daulah dealt with them sternly. Khwaja Mutasim, on a charge of having misappropriated a huge sum pertaining to the treasury, was imprisoned, his mansion confiscated. Later he was released only to leave for Delhi. Shaikh Abdullah was chased out of the province to take shelter in Ghazipur under the jurisdiction of Burhan-ul-Mulk.⁴¹

All this proved to be the beginning of the end of Fakhr-ud-Daulah's power in Bihar, which was precipitated by a new development leading to a change in the equations among the nobles at the centre. A factor in this was the Maratha threat.

Early in the eighteenth century, the Maratha policy of northward expansion caused serious concern to the Mughals. Regarding the means to be adopted to checkmate the menace, however, opinion at the imperial centre was divided; the *wazir*, Muhammad Qamar-ud-Din and his party which included his cousin, Nizam-ul-Mulk, the viceroy of the Deccan (who suffered the most against the Marathas) advocated an all-out war, while many others at the court, under the leadership of Samsam-ud-Daulah, were for a controlled move and negotiated settlement.⁴² Burhan-ul-Mulk feigned indifference so long as his power in Awadh was not in danger. He did not even hesitate to support their (the Marathas') ally, the Bundelas of central India, against one or the other Mughal appointee, like Muhammad Khan Bangash who threatened to restrain his unchallenged position in Awadh.⁴³ But when the Bundela territory began to be used by the Marathas to raid the areas close to Awadh he joined the camp of the *wazir* and manipulated to secure Agra and Malwa, then in control of Samsam-ud-Daulah's friend Raja Jai Singh, to check the Maratha advance in the south-west of Awadh and Allahabad.⁴⁴ To Samsam-ud-Daulah this meant the loss of not only an ally but also of a region in upper India. He had to reinforce his position in the east.

Again, Burhan-ul-Mulk also had to be watchful about the movements in his neighbourhood of the Afghan chiefs including Muhammad Khan Bangash

⁴⁰ *Siyar*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 469, *Tarikh-i-Muzaffari*, f. 201a.

⁴¹ Ashub, *op. cit.*, ff. 55.

⁴² Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-238.

⁴³ M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-266.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271, Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-217.

of Farrukhabad who also held the governorship of Allahabad. He had to get Allahabad for a friend, if not for himself, immediately. Accordingly, he first managed the province for Sarbuland Khan, with *faujdaris* of a large part of it for himself. The entire province was taken over by him in 1736.⁴⁵ In the early 1730s, Burhan-ul-Mulk himself confronted too many difficulties to pay full attention to those of his erstwhile allies, like Roshan-ud-Daulah. Further, Burhan-ul-Mulk must have felt uneasy at Fakhr-ud-Daulah's inroads into *sarkar* Ghazipur, on the eastern border of Allahabad, ostensibly in pursuit of the Bihar *zamindars* and Shaikh Abdullah. Samsam-ud-Daulah, thus, had no difficulty in securing Fakhr-ud-Daulah's transfer from Bihar, which was then added to the governorship of Shuja-ud-Din, his protégé in Bengal.⁴⁶

It is a matter of conjecture how closely the politics and administration of Bihar at this stage had come to be influenced also by the developments in the centre's relations with Bengal. In 1712 when Farrukh Siyar, following the news of the death of his father in Lahore and Jahandar Shah's coronation, proclaimed himself the emperor in Patna, Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, then the *diwan* of Bengal, not only refused to comply with his orders, but killed his man, Ajmeri Khan, in a battle near Murshidabad, the new capital of the province.⁴⁷ Later, however, both the new emperor, Farrukh Siyar and Murshid Quli Khan, each appreciating the strength of the other, had to make a compromise. Farrukh Siyar could not afford to meet the threat of disruption of the flow of the revenue from Bengal, while on the other hand, Murshid Quli Khan needed *sanads* from the centre to legitimise his power. Murshid Quli Khan accepted the new emperor and in return he retained not only his existing position, but also got the *subadari* of Orissa and *niyabat* of Bengal. An infant Prince Farkhunda Siyar, who died soon, was the new absentee governor of the province.⁴⁸ In 1715 when Mir Jumla had to leave Delhi as the new governor of Bengal and Bihar he was—as we saw above—instructed not to proceed beyond Patna.

But the relations between the central authorities and Nawab Murshid Quli Khan were not smooth under Farrukh Siyar, because of, among other things, a sharp difference between them in matters relating to the English East India Company's trade in Bengal. The English made full use of these differences and obtained facilities and privileges through orders from the centre, first in 1714 and then in 1717, to the obvious inconvenience of the Nawab who, according to some reports, never allowed their execution in

⁴⁵ *Tabsira*, *op. cit.*, f. 89a.

⁴⁶ Yusuf Ali Khan, *Tarikh-i-Bangala Mahabat Jangi*, ed., Abd-us-Subhan, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 6-8, Karam Ali, *Muzaffar Nama*, ff. 20.

⁴⁷ Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47.

⁴⁸ Kamwar, *op. cit.*, pp. 173 and 182.

full.⁴⁹ The central authorities then seem to become extraordinarily considerate to the Nawab, extolling his loyalty excessively, perhaps to ensure it, and promising him full authority in local matters, perhaps to mollify him and compensate for the restrictions which the famous *farman* of 1717 had imposed on his position.⁵⁰ Around this time Samsam-ud-Daulah emerged as the important link between the centre and the eastern provinces. Bihar then was in virtual control of his agent, his own brother Khwaja Mutasim, while Murshid Quli Khan grew in power and authority in Bengal.⁵¹

While the provincial administrators' endeavour for additional powers implied modifications in the existing "rules and regulations" set by the centre, it posed no threat to its overarching position as such. There had to be someone to arbitrate in the event of a clash between the provincial officials and local powermongers. And who could have been a better umpire than the erstwhile powerful imperial centre? In addition, the threats from without, including the Maratha raids, also nourished the necessity of continued bonds with the centre of the empire as well as with its different units. *Mansab* and *jagir*, the symbols of the empire, thus, remained intact, even if not wholly in substance, diluting the local claim of *hukumat* (rulership) and *sardari* (leadership). The major focus of the local powermonger, thus, got diverted to commanding the channels of mediation. With Sarbuland Khan, a move was initiated to favour the governor as the sole mediator between the centre and the province. But the process was disrupted because his weak successors had no such vision or because Samsam-ud-Daulah, the *mir bakshi* and the *amir-ul-umara*, had his own stake in the eastern provinces. Sarbuland's recall, thus, caused major damage to Bihar government. By Fakhr-ud-Daulah's time it was too late for him to emerge as the principal mediator. When he tried for this position, he faced trouble from people like Khwaja Mutasim and Shaikh Abdullah.

Why did the local officials seek additional powers? Why did a noble in Delhi clash with the one in the province and try to control the avenues of the province's mediation with the centre? The answers can be provided by the developments inside the province, in particular the turmoil in the countryside and its context.

II

Conflicts and compromises with the *zamindars* were an integral part of

⁴⁹ Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-191.

⁵⁰ Compare Saiyid Abdullah Khan's letters to Murshid Quli Khan in Mehta Balmukand, *Balmukand Nama, Letters of a King Maker of the Eighteenth Century*; ed., and trans., Satish Chandra, Bombay, 1972, pp. 14-15 and 34-35.

⁵¹ Compare Kamwar, *op. cit.*, pp. 292 and 299, for instance, for royal gifts to Murshid Quli Khan and his additional title of Ala-ud-Daulah by Muhammad Shah in his second regnal

the history of the Mughals in India. The *zamindars* were hereditarily in control of land and its wealth in the countryside. They were also the local political and administrative elites. No power from outside could have ventured to sustain a claim over the surplus produce without their support, following either an all-out war against them or often a series of diplomatic manoeuvres and bargains.

The Mughals, in a large measure, were able to integrate the *zamindars* in the imperial edifice and even though they (the *zamindars*) continued struggling for a greater share, they turned out to be the partners of the Mughals in power and economic exploitation. The hereditary rulers of the localities, who enjoyed practically sovereign powers in their territories, were absorbed in administration and in return, like any other ordinary official, were given a *mansab* and a *jagir*. In all major military campaigns these *zamindars* with armed contingents of their kinsfolk played a prominent role. The lesser *zamindars*, spread all over the empire, formed its backbone and were also responsible for the maintenance of law and order. *Zamindari* for them became 'the right of service, a service obligation', often described as *khidmat*. In return they were entitled to various types of perquisites and discounts.⁵²

This arrangement was intended to build and reinforce the centre. The *zamindar* was intended to depend, for his position, on the goodwill of the Mughal emperor than on his claim to heredity. If a *zamindar* incurred the displeasure of the emperor he lost his *zamindari*. The Mughal emperor insisted on having a direct pact with the higher *zamindars'* subordinates in his territory and characterised these *zamindaris* as his *watan jagirs*.⁵³

The arrangement remained largely unimpaired so long as the Mughals, on the one hand, maintained their military superiority and the *zamindars* saw the benefits of the alliance on the other. By the early eighteenth century cracks had begun to surface in 'the apparatus of the empire'. Stresses and strains in the emperor's relations with his nobles told heavily on the authority of the Mughals in the provinces. The Mughals were rarely able to effectively protect the *zamindars* against the encroachments of their neighbours of other castes and clans. Their control over *jagirs* was crippled.⁵⁴ Efforts, therefore, had to be made anew to reinforce this arrangement in order to maintain royal authority in whatever form. *Ijara* came to be the cornerstone of the renewed arrangement, which facilitated greater control over

year. Murshid Quli Khan was now Mutaman-ul-Mulk Ala-ud-Daulah Jafar Khan Nasiri.

⁵² For an excellent account of the position of zamindars in Mughal India, see S. Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars under the Mughals', in R.E. Frykenberg, *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, Madison, 1969, pp. 17-31; see also Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, *op cit.*, pp. 136-189; A.R. Khan, *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar*, Simla, 1977, passim, particularly Introduction and Conclusion

⁵³ S. Nurul Hasan, *op. cit.*, A.R. Khan, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ M. Alam, *op cit.*, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 24-43.

power and revenue to the *zamindars*. But while it encouraged political and financial decentralisation, it also generated further conflicts at the local plane and, thus, created conditions for the centre's symbols to remain significant and for its intervention to continue. This *ijara* was in effect *ta'ahhud* (contract) by the zamindar and was not only for the revenue; it extended to political power as well. It signified the ijaradar's *hukumat*. The Mughals' intervention was to be sought and tolerated only to keep his territory economically integrated to the outer world. The transformation in the Mughals' arrangement with the *zamindars* is illustrated, among others, from the history of their relations with the Ujjainiya Rajputs of Bihar.

The Ujjainiya of *sarkar* Shahabad Bhojpur occupied a pre-eminent position in Bihar. They contributed, in several ways, to the process of expansion and consolidation of Mughal rule in the region and were, in return, generously rewarded with reasonably high *mansabs*, *inams* and the titles of Rajas and Maharajas.⁵⁵ They were, thus, regional agents of the Mughal central power, participating conspicuously in 'high politics' and the Mughal princes' wars for the throne. There were, however, also incidents of rebellion by the chieftains in Shahabad region, but during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the Ujjainiya uprisings constantly posed a serious threat to the Mughal authority.

The principal Ujjainiya chief in Shahabad *sarkar* in the late seventeenth century was Raja Rudra Singh, succeeded for a brief period by his nephew, Raja Mandhata Singh. Both with Rudra and Mandhata, the Mughals had generally peaceful relations. They were satisfied with their positions and extended support to the Mughal officials.⁵⁶ Still, a large number of their clansmen were at war with the Mughals in Shahabad, Rohtas, Saran, Champaran and around Patna, the capital of the province, under the leadership of one Kunwar Dhir, the zamindar of *pargana* Peero in *sarkar* Shahabad. It was to set Bihar affairs right that the Emperor entrusted the province to Prince Muhammad Azim-ush-Shan and Murshid Quli Khan, who had steered Bengal out of the difficulties that had accompanied the rise of the Afghans and the revolt of Sobha Singh, the *zamindar* of Bhusana.⁵⁷ The Prince was given special powers, a rise in *mansab* and control over several local offices,⁵⁸ to deal with the rebels, and, indeed, the Prince's army did

⁵⁵ For a detailed and documented history of the Ujjainiyas' relations with the Mughals, see Munshi Binayak Prasad, *Tawarikh-i-Ujjainiya* (Urdu), n.d., Vols. II and III, Lucknow passim; R N Prasad provides a summary in *History of Bhojpur*, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–85. For a useful discussion on the issues involved in these relations, see D.H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 159–176.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II

⁵⁷ Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–26; Om Prakash, 'The Sobha Singh Revolt: Dutch Policy and Response', *Bengal Past and Present*, 94, 178, 1975.

⁵⁸ Compare *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* (Aurangzeb), Sitamau transcripts, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

defeat the turbulent chief, forcing him to flee out of the province towards Allahabad. But this defeat and also the later reverses at the hands of the Prince's successor meant little check on the rebel's actions.

The Ujjainiyas, thus, continued to defy the Mughals even after Dhir's death in 1712, when their leadership was taken over by Dhir's son, Siddhisht Narayan. Siddhisht Narayan proved a still graver threat, mobilising about 30,000 horsemen and foot-soldiers from amongst his kinsfolk.⁵⁹ Often merchants sought special armed escort from the governor to pass through the territories of Shahabad, which were located on the way from Bengal and Bihar to Agra, Delhi and the other trade centres of upper India. They carried out raids even in the *parganas* around the capital town of the *suba*, usurped many fertile *jagir mahals* and threatened to block the despatch of royal treasure to the imperial capital.⁶⁰ By 1715, Siddhisht Narayan had become so powerful that Mir Jumla, the newly appointed governor, failed to chastise him even after he had come with an army of about 20,000 which included a special battalion of eight to nine thousand Mughal veterans.⁶¹ The next governor, Sarbuland Khan and his son Khanazad Khan, *faujdar* of Shahabad, however, succeeded in defeating the rebel and capturing many of his strongholds, following a series of engagements with a force of 20,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry in 1716.⁶²

The Mughal victory over the Ujjainiyas, it is true, owed a good deal to Sarbuland Khan's military prowess and skill. Earlier, during his tenure as governor of Allahabad he had led several successful campaigns against the *zamindars* of Jaunpur. Without losing control over that province, he had also provided reinforcement to the governor of Bihar.⁶³ But it is notable that in his campaigns against the Ujjainiyas and also against other turbulent *zamindars* his strength lay principally in the fact that he could requisition the services of the other *zamindars* for his purposes. This he could achieve by initiating with them a new arrangement, generally described in our sources as *ta'ahhud*, *muqarrari istimrari* and *ijara*, which all meant revenue farming, with little detailed yearly *tashkhis* (assessment and fixation).⁶⁴ Clearly the new arrangement was preferred as it guaranteed some sort of regularity in the payment of revenue by the local magnates, even as it also meant disadvantages for the state in that its agents were no longer to enjoy the possible, though risky, additional collection (*taufir*) every year. The state grew 'risk-averse' as the economy and the budget began to slip out of its control following the turbulence all around in the empire.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Murtaza Husain Bilgrami, *Hadikat-ul-Aqalim*, Lucknow, 1879.

⁶⁰ Mehta Balmukand, *Balmukand Nama*, p. 15.

⁶¹ Muhammad Ahsan Ijad, *Farrukh Siyar Nama*, Br. M. Or. 25, ff. 61a-64a; Shivdas, *op. cit.*, f. 16b

⁶² *Akhbarat* (Farrukh Siyar), 3rd and 4th R. Ys., pp. 28, 41.

⁶³ *Akhbarat* (Farrukh Siyar), 5th R.Y. p. 43. For Sarbuland Khan's campaigns against the *zamindars* in *suba* Allahabad, see *Akhbarat* (Farrukh Siyar), 3rd R.Y., I, p. 192, II, p. 268.

⁶⁴ R.N. Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 100. Prasad cites *samads* and *parwanas* from the Dumraon Raj Collection.

⁶⁵ Murat Çizakça explains the growth of the fixed and full tenure tax-farming (*iltizam*)

Towards the last years of Farrukh Siyar's reign (1712–19) the new arrangement with the *zamindars* began to be encouraged. Horil Singh, for instance, secured *muqarrari istimrari* (fixed permanent) contracts for a number of villages in addition to *jagirs* and *nankars* in his *zamindari* in the period between 1716 and 1724.⁶⁶ Such agreements seem to have been reached also with the *zamindars* of the Palamau area, which had not received due attention since the middle of Aurangzeb's reign. In an eighteenth century account of the Chotanagpur area, prepared for the use of early British administrators, Sarbuland Khan is reported to have

settled the parganas of Sher and Shergauty, below the Hills, with Irja Agoury, son of Sulaiman Qanungo. Again, Raja Nagbunshy Singh, zamindar of Nagpur to whom the *ghatwals* of Palamau Ramgarh and Badamy were subordinate, sent his agent Bedman Das Tacoor through the mediation of Irja Agoury and agreed to pay a *nadhrana* of 100,000, of which 45,000 was to be paid in 'species' and the rest in diamonds. The settlement of Sher and Akowrie, Datars... and Koodida, situated below the *ghats*, was made with Mirza Azeez Cawn, a Rohilla, and Agoury Ameen Singh for Rs. 35,000 to be paid at Patna.⁶⁷

In many cases the new arrangements were reached through intermediaries. One such intermediary was Abdullah Khan who, as the author of *Siyar-ul-Muta'akkhirin* notes:

was a man of consequence in those parts, who seemed to be the main hinge of all government business in that province, for he had for a length of time been always employed by every governor either as his deputy or as a general farmer of revenue. He had connections with almost all the *zamindars*... and had acquired the goodwill of troops as well as of every individual in the province.⁶⁸

A somewhat clear evidence of *hukumat* with *ijara* comes a little later from the time of *nizamat* of Fakhr-ud-Daulah, who governed the *suba* during 1727–34, and who chose Horil Singh in 1727 as the *naib faujdar* and Shiqdar of *pargana* Behea, Shahabad, to keep peace and

in seventeenth century Ottoman Empire in terms of the State's 'risk-averseness'. See his paper 'Tax-Farming and Decentralisation in the Ottoman Empire, 1520–1695' (mimeographed) presented at the seminar on 'The State, Decentralisation and Tax-Farming (The Ottoman Empire, Iran and India)' held at Munich University in May 1990.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Earlier in 1712 also the governor, Nusrat Khan suggested a new arrangement to be made with the *zamindars* of the province. See *Akhbarat* (Jahandar Shah).

⁶⁷ Q. Ahmad, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ *Siyar, op. cit.*, II, p. 469

order in the region.⁶⁹ In 1730, he negotiated fresh terms with the Palamau *zamindars*.⁷⁰

It was, thus, with the objective of dealing with local problems that the governors sought more powers. Bihar politics seemed to be heading for a kind of transformation, in which everyone from the governor, who had more pronounced links with Delhi, to the *zamindar* with his base and moorings in the countryside, struggled to extend his power. This created conditions of seeming chaos and conflicts shaking the existing framework of political relations. But the political order as such still promised dividends; the conflicts were for acquiring them. The province, as we shall see below, had enough resources to inspire each to fight in the knowledge that victory would guarantee prosperity. The fact that even administrative offices and positions could be purchased with money was conducive to the arrangement that the governor now tried to make with the local magnates. Besides the *zamindars* who, confident of their paying capacity, endeavoured to buy a greater share in political power, a number of local urban magnates now held positions in provincial finance and administration on a permanent basis.⁷¹ They all clamoured to share Bihar's wealth and affluence which was illustrated, among other things, in the consistent rise in the revenues for over a century in the province.

III

In Bihar in the decades following the reign of Akbar (1556–1605) revenue, both the estimated (*jama*) and the actual (*hasil*), rose enormously. The *Ain-i-Akbari*, compiled in 1595, puts the *jama* figure of *suba* at 22,19,19,404 *dams*. By the time Akbar died (1605) the increase in *jama* was by over 4 crores, rising by another five crores during Jahangir's reign (1605–26). The increase was nearly two-fold during the period between roughly 1630 and 1670; that is in the time of Shahjahan (1626–56) and the early years of Aurangzeb's reign (1656–1707). *Jama* rose further by about 50 per cent at the time of Alivardi Khan (1732–56) in the eighteenth century. (See Table 1)

The actual yield or the *hasil* figures also seem to have generally corresponded to the *jama*. Ahmad Reza Khan has collected some interesting *hasil* figures⁷² which are worth considering. (See Table 2)

⁶⁹ R N Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 102

⁷⁰ Q. Ahmad, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ I.O. 4369, for instance, mentions the following: Kharak Sen, Kayastha Karan; Gulab Rai, Kayastha Amat, Patni Mal; Kayastha Sribastab; Muhammad Baqar; Maghu; Hari Singh, Kayastha Karan; Manjhu Mal and Mohan Lal; Ganga Prasad, Kayastha Sribastab; Nathu Mal, Kayastha Sribastab, Taj-ud-Din and Muhammad Raza; Kora Mal, Sitapat Rai and Khushal Chand, Kayastha Sribastab.

⁷² *Comprehensive History of Bihar, op. cit.*, pp. 529–530.

Table 1
Jama of Suba Bihar

No.	Date	Jama in dams
1.	1595-96	22,19,19,404
2.	1605	26,27,74,167
3.	1605-27	31,60,33,672
4.	1633-38	36,88,30,000
5.	1642-43	38,09,30,000
6.	1646-47	40,00,00,000
7.	"	40,00,00,000
8.	1638-56	38,32,00,000
9.	"	38,32,00,000
10.	"	40,60,00,000
11.	1642-56	39,46,56,932
12.	1638-56	48,60,00,000
13.	1646-56	38,32,00,000
14.	1656	54,53,00,335
15.	1667	72,17,97,019
16.	1656-87	37,84,13,380
17.	1676	45,71,81,000
18.	1678	46,48,55,000
19.	1680	53,51,65,811
20.	1685	39,43,44,532
21.	1687-91	40,71,81,000
22.	1687-95	40,71,81,000
23.	1687-1707	40,71,81,000
24.	1709	40,71,81,000
25.	1712-19	52,76,69,337
26.	1712-36	52,85,55,358
27.	1735-36	52,19,37,670
28.	1750	53,61,93,190
29.	1750	53,61,93,190
30.	"	54,53,00,035

Table 2
Some Hasil Figures

Year	Hasil in Rupees	Hasil as % of Jama
1685	85,17,683	86 39
1687-91	93,05,431	91.41
1687-95	93,25,551	91.61
1709	93,05,431	91 41
1750	1,00,79,141	75 93

Source : Based on the tables in Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay, 1963, pp 401-402 and Ahmad Reza Khan, 'Revenue Statistics of Bihar' in S H. Askari and Q. Ahmad, eds, *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, Vol II, Part II, Patna, 1987, p 528-530

There were, however, some unusually low collections ranging between Rs. 48,85,571 and Rs. 57,14,873 in the early 1670s. A possible explanation could be the reported Bihar famine. Around 1670, according to John Marshall who was present in the province at the time, the whole of the country from Banaras to Rajmahal, which then took three to four days of travel, was in the throes of the worst kind of famine. Marshall first noticed the ravages of the famine in May 1670 in *sarkar* Murger, on his way from Bengal to Patna. The famine was caused due to crop-failure and the inundation of the Ganga. Marshall's account is supported by the observations of a Dutch traveller, De Graffie, on the poverty and the misery of the people of Patna at the time. But in none of the contemporary indigenous sources is the famine noticed. Marshall and De Graffie may seem then to have exaggerated its impact.⁷³

By 1676, following some reliefs and good harvests, the situation appears to have improved. The revenue in c. 1676 was assessed at 45,71,81,000 *dams*, and in 1678 at 46,48,55,000 *dams*. Around the same time the Emperor Aurangzeb is reported to have ordered a full-fledged fresh survey of the province. The survey was, however, left incomplete (only five out of the eight *sarkars* and a *wilayat* could be measured and assessed anew) possibly because of the Emperor's preoccupation with the Jodhpur Rajput rebellion and problems in the Deccan.⁷⁴ Again, in the province at the time, political conditions were a bit fluid. An adventurer, claiming to be the son of Prince Muhammad Shuja, the Emperor's brother who had been the governor of Bengal and had contested for the throne in the 1656–58 war of succession, gave a call to local functionaries and armed bands to rise against the governor. In another case, one Ganga Ram, an important local official, faced with the charge of embezzlement and misappropriation, rebelled, plundered the town of Bihar with an army of 4000 horsemen and advanced towards Patna. The situation was, however, in control soon.⁷⁵

By the early eighteenth century both the *jama* and the *hasil* had registered further improvement. According to eighteenth century reports the revenues in Bihar generally showed a stable upward trend, and the *hasil* usually approximated the *jama* until about the early 1760s when Mir Qasim precipitated problems for both the government and the *zamindars* by insisting that they pay even the margin of their profits.⁷⁶

⁷³ Compare S.A. Khan, *John Marshall in India, Notes and Observations on Bengal, 1669–72*, Oxford, 1927, pp. 149–154.

⁷⁴ I O. 4369 According to this report, Khwaja Tara Chand, *diwan* of *khalisa* who had been assigned the work was transferred before he could complete the survey.

⁷⁵ S H. Askari, 'Bihar in the Time of Aurangzeb', *Journal of Bihar Research Society*, 31, 4, 1945, pp. 244–271 and 32, 1 and 2, 1946, pp. 56–72 and 151–181.

⁷⁶ *Ahwal-i-Sarkar Shahabad wa Rohas*, Berlin MS. OR. Oct. 103, Catalogue, No. 503. But this is to be accepted with some reservations, for earlier on several occasions the Ujjainiyas

The rise in revenue figures in the seventeenth century has been explained in terms of the silver influx into the Mughal economy and the 'Price Revolution', which, in turn, also figures as a cornerstone in the edifice built for Mughal Indian economic history.⁷⁷ Such an explanation, at first sight, appeals as it also helps in placing several issues of the general history of the Mughal empire in a neat model developed conveniently after the debate around the history of the early modern European economy. But it provides little enlightenment when we go into the regions to examine the developments there in some detail. It is true that in the seventeenth century, in the wake of the increase in the volume of foreign trade, there was an unmistakable rise in the flow into India of precious metals in payment for the goods exported both by Asian and European merchants. But as the sources of information about the flow primarily concern its adverse effect on European states and economies, they, as it has been pointed out, have highlighted it in an exaggerated manner. This information is to be used with caution by historians of Mughal India.

It is interesting that while the European theorists on the one hand drew a link between the volume of currency in circulation and the level of prices and there were writers who predicted that the continued export of silver to the Indies would eventually raise the price of Asian commodities, on the other, 'the members of the East India Directorate, some of whom were expert authorities on monetary and financial matters, failed to see a theoretical connection between the massive export of treasure from Europe and the price level in Asia.'⁷⁸ Their silence may have been 'something of a minor mystery' theoretically; but it was grounded in the fact that in real life, as we shall see below, it was not possible to perceive the 'Price Revolution' and, above all, to relate it to an increase in money supply. The connection between the two in the Indian context was far from being clear. This was pointed by Om Prakash and J. Krishnamurty as far back as in 1970.⁷⁹ Since then Sanjay Subrahmanyam has shown that the attempt to extend the analogy of the American silver and the European 'Price Revolution' to the Asian context floundered not only because of a lack of

clashed with the Mughals. In the early 1740s, according to this report, Ujjainiyas deposited eight lakhs out of the Rs. sixteen lakhs which they collected from the peasants

⁷⁷ Aziza Hasan, 'The Silver Currency Output of the Mughal Empire and Prices in India in the 16th and 17th Centuries', *Indian Economic and Social History Review (IESHR)*, 6, 1, 1969, pp. 85-116; Irfan Habib, 'Monetary System and Prices' in T. Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 360-381. See also, M. Athar Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

⁷⁸ K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760*, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁹ Om Prakash and J. Krishnamurty, 'Mughal Silver Currency: A Critique', *IESHR*, 7, 1, 1970, pp. 139-150. This article was written in response to Aziza Hasan's 'The Silver Currency Output of the Mughal Empire', *op. cit.*

adequate quantitative information and contradictory evidence but also because it suffered from certain obvious theoretical flaws.⁸⁰

The contention of the silver influx-price rise protagonists does not stand the scrutiny of the relevant evidence from diverse regions.⁸¹ We have little evidence for prices of Bihar. On the basis of some of the prices which Ahmad Reza Khan has collected it is difficult to speculate any trend.⁸² But it is significant for our purpose that in its neighbourhood in Bengal the prices of commodities like rice, wheat, sugar and *ghee* seem to be generally stable or, at worst, fluctuating. This seems to be the case even with the seventeenth century prices of saltpetre, acquired mostly from Bihar. All this while there was an evident increase in the import of bullion into Bengal in the late seventeenth century.

The average annual value of the treasure imported by the Dutch Company increased from f.1.28 million in the 1660s to f.2.00 million in the 1690s, f.2.43 million in the 1700s, and f.2.87 million in 1710s. In addition, there were substantial bullion imports by the English East India Company, besides the small quantities brought in by the French East India Company.⁸³

There is some evidence of sustained and marked increase in the prices of textiles in the years between 1720 and 1760. But it is difficult to relate it to any 'deepseated monetary changes'.⁸⁴ On the other hand, in the latter half of the eighteenth century when bullion had begun to flow out of the region, the prices of some commodities showed an increase.⁸⁵ Irfan Habib cites some prices from Agra to suggest some kind of sustained inflationary trends.⁸⁶ But the relationship between his evidence on the movement of prices and the available revenue figures of Bihar is unclear. For one, the Agra prices hardly help us to speculate about the price level in Bihar, considering the distance and the slow medieval means of transport. The

⁸⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Precious Metal Flows and Prices in Western and Southern Asia, 1500-1750: Some Comparative and Conjunctural Aspects', *Studies in History*, (New Series), 7, 1, 1991 (forthcoming).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Ahmad Raza Khan, 'Suba of Bihar under the Mughals (1582-1707)', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 1985, Appendix A.

⁸³ Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, Delhi, 1988, p. 249; see also pp. 252-253 for prices. For the prices of saltpetre, see Susil Chaudhury, *Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal, 1650-1720*, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 251-252.

⁸⁴ K.N. Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁸⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *op. cit.*, citing A.S.M. Akhtar Husain, 'A Quantitative Study of Price Movements in Bengal during the 18th and 19th Centuries', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1978.

⁸⁶ Cf. T. Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 375.

Bengal prices could perhaps have been closer; but as there was no sustained rise in Bengal prices these, again, are of little use in explaining the 'inflation' in the revenue of our province.

There is, thus, not much justification either in the available evidence or in theory to wish away the rise in revenue figures merely as their adjustment to rising prices. Instead, it would perhaps be more rewarding to examine and put together qualitative information about the local history and economy.

It is not without significance that the increase in *jama* coincided with the extension and consolidation of Mughal authority in the province, in particular, in the hilly and forested region in the south. Khokar and Kharagpur were brought under full control following military expeditions in the times of Jahangir (1605–26) and Shahjahan (1626–56) and the early years of Aurangzeb (1656–1707). Palamau was conquered by Shaista Khan (1639–43) to be annexed and consolidated later by Daud Khan in the early 1660s.⁸⁷ Even though the area was itself not so rich in revenue, control over it implied stability in the settled central and northern regions of the province. Some diamond mines also lay there, earning for the area the name of *wilayat-i-kan-i-almas*.⁸⁸

More important than the conquest of the area was the formation of a new *sarkar*, right in a highly fertile and rich part of the province. Under Akbar the *suba* was divided into seven *sarkars*, namely Bihar, Champaran, Hajipur, Munger, Rohtas, Saran and Tirhut. By Shahjahan's time a new *sarkar* under the name of Shahabad Bhojpur had been created, bifurcating Rohtas into two, the old Rohtas and the new Shahabad. The territory of the new *sarkar* also included, in all probability, the lately claimed lands along the western borders, while *sarkar* Rohtas now extended possibly into the Chero areas in the south.⁸⁹ The formation of a new *sarkar* in the lands of the powerful Ujjainiya Rajput zamindars was not meant simply to ensure better political and more efficient administrative control. It also implied extension of cultivation. According to an eighteenth century historical discourse on the origins of *zamindaris* (with an account of the *sarkar*), 'most of the *zamindaris* during the reign of Shahjahan originated in *bankatai* or populating land after clearing forests. Those who did so

⁸⁷ Compare *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, ed., Syud Ahmad Khan, Ghazipur, 1863, pp. 154–155; Mutamad Khan, *Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri*, Calcutta, 1863, pp. 348–350, 260–261; Muhammad Kazim, *Alamgirnama*, ed., Khadim Husain and Abd-ul-Hai, Calcutta, 1868, pp. 648 ff.

⁸⁸ Compare, for instance, I.O. 4369

⁸⁹ For some idea of the location and the boundary lines of the *sarkars* see, Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 1982, sheet 10A and notes pp. 39–40. Habib's map does not show the new *sarkar*, even though he notices it in the Notes. Creation of a new *sarkar* obviously followed extension of cultivation in the area. In a similar development in upper northern India, the emergence in the early eighteenth century of *chakla* Bareilly and *sarkar* Muradabad within the erstwhile Badaon and Sambhal *sarkars* illustrated the manifest richness of the region Cf. M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, op. cit., p. 253.

became zamindars and obtained *nankars* (part of the revenue as *zamindari* right) for their lifetime. After the death of such zamindars, their sons obtained *sanads* for the rights held by them on condition of continued service'.⁹⁰

What is notable is that this development was not limited to *sarkar* Shahabad alone. The same report in a section on *Haqiqat-i-Suba Bihar* notes:

from the time of Shahjahan, it was customary that wood-cutters and plough-men used to accompany his troops, so that forests may be cleared and land cultivated. Ploughs used to be donated by the government. Short-term *pattas* (documents stating the revenue demand) were given, fixed by government at the rate of 1 anna per *bigha* during the first year. *Chaudharis* (intermediaries) were appointed to keep the *riaya* happy with their considerate behaviour and to populate the country. They were to ensure that the *pattas* were issued in accordance with Imperial orders and the pledged word was kept. There was a general order that whosoever cleared a forest and brought land under cultivation, such land would be his *zamindari*. *Qanungos* were instructed to prepare the settlement regulations with the concurrence of the *chaudharis* in a manner as to contribute to the populousness of the territory. The revenue demand was to be determined accordingly. They were to prepare the papers from harvest to harvest and to deposit these with the *amil* at the end of the year. They were to put forward the claims of *rozina*, *dastur*, *nankar* and *in'am* etc., before the *amil* at the time of the settlement of the *pargana*, keeping in view their devoted service to the State and the welfare of the *raiyyat*. They (the *qanungos*?) were required to obtain the *qubuliyat* in accordance with the regulations, and deposit these with their own signatures, and to secure for them *pattas*. The state revenue was to be deposited by them in the imperial treasury at each *tahsil* harvest-wise, and instalment-wise.

Further the report also records official instructions that after allowing one plough per twenty *bighas* of well-cultivated land, the other ploughs should be allotted to virgin land or that which had lain fallow for a long time. Ploughs should also be given on behalf of the State. The price of these ploughs should be realised from the *zamindars* in two to three years. Every *hal mir* (i.e., one who has four or five ploughs) should be given a *dastar* (turban) so that he may clear the forests and bring land under cultivation. In this manner, the people and the *riaya* would be attracted by good treatment to come from other regions and *subas* to bring under cultivation waste land and land under forest.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Compare S. Nurul Hasan, 'Three Studies of *Zamindari* System', in *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1969, p. 235. Nurul Hasan in this paper analyses primarily two important sets of Persian documents from Bihar, namely *Ahwal-i-Sarkar Shahabad/wa Rohtas* and *Haqiqat-i-Suba Bihar* in the context of the massive eighteenth century material on the origins and the nature of *zamindaris*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

The number of *parganas* and *mahals* (revenue districts and subdivisions of *sarkar*) also increased substantially by this means, from 200 under Akbar to 256 plus a *wilayat* (territory) of the diamond mines under Aurangzeb and his successors.⁹²

Table 3

Sarkar-wise Jama Figures and Parganas

<i>Sarkar</i>	<i>No. of Parganas</i>		<i>Jama in dams</i>	
	<i>Ain</i>	<i>18th century</i>	<i>Ain</i>	<i>18th century</i>
Bihar	46	63 including 2 mints	8,44,65,490	22,77,45,905
Munger	31	40	2,96,22,181	6,23,74,807
Champaran	3	3	55,13,420	1,13,75,920
Hajipur	11	11	2,73,635	5,12,44,470
Saran	17	18	1,61,72,304	4,29,55,045
Tirhut	74	102	1,92,20,82	4,43,97,542
Rohtas	18	7	4,08,79,201	3,60,44,103
Shahabad	—	12	—	4,99,27,091
<i>new sarkar</i> bifurcated from Rohtas in 17th c.				

Source : *Ain's* figures are based on Ahmad Reza Khan's calculations from MSS. Add. 6552 and Add. 7652. For the eighteenth century figures see I.O.4369.

The rate of rise was not uniform throughout the *suba*. In some areas, indeed, the revenues registered an unmistakable decline, while in some others the increase was nominal. Still in many other areas the increase was spectacular. In *sarkar* Bihar, for instance, in thirty-seven *parganas* the *jama* rose, by 100 per cent and more, in eighteen of them, while in five *mahals*, on the other hand, there was a sharp fall.⁹³ I have been able to locate some evidence to explain such differences in terms of possible variations in productivity and production in a region of Awadh.⁹⁴ In the case of the rich *parganas* in *sarkar* Bihar, it is not without significance that they were either located close to a river channel and the villages therein thus had good irrigation facilities, or they contained a market and *mandi* and thus the *zamindars* and the peasants around had some incentives to produce more and better marketable crops. Villages in Arwal, Atri, Ekil, Pilich and Telehra, for instance, must have had obvious advantages of good irrigation due to their location in relation to rivers. Arwal was also an important

⁹² I.O.4369; also see Ahmad Raza Khan, *op. cit.*, chapter II for extension of cultivation and increase in cash crops.

⁹³ *Comprehensive History of Bihar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 535–536.

⁹⁴ M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–105.

town on the road from Patna to Sahsaram and Rohtas.⁹⁵ On the other hand, Ballia, Bihar, Bhimpur, Gaya, Ghiyaspur, Patna, Phulwari, Rajgir and Somai were industrial, commercial and cultural centres of different sizes and degrees in the province. Around Ballia and Bhimpur were cultivated indigo, opium and sugar; Rajgir and Somai were known for their quarries, and Ghiyaspur boasted of striped silk.⁹⁶

Bihar also experienced tremendous growth of trade following the establishment of the European trading factories in Patna by the mid-seventeenth century. The Dutch came to Patna in 1632. Around the same time the English also founded their factories in Bihar. They made concentrated attempts to settle in Bihar following the Gujarat famine which threatened their trade in western India. Saif Khan, the governor of Bihar, (1625–32) who had earlier held Gujarat and favoured the English there, facilitated the establishment and success of the English trade in the province.⁹⁷ In the mid-seventeenth century the Dutch and the English competed fiercely to control Patna which had risen as an important centre of supply of sugar and saltpetre, then in great demand in Europe as the principal ingredient for the manufacture of gunpowder.⁹⁸ Bihar was also known as a source of supply of cotton and woollen goods and was estimated to sell woollen manufactures among other areas to 'the cold countries extending from Tartary in the north to China in the east'. Towards the end of seventeenth century the French too had their factory in Patna and traded in the region in 'cloth, sugar, wax, silk, and saltpetre'.⁹⁹

European commercial activities in the region, one can speculate, must have led to an extension in the cultivation of cash crops like cotton, opium and sugar. They might have also provided incentives to local artisanal production and all this contributed a good deal to the rise in revenue figures. This is well illustrated from the case of *sarkar* Saran which ranked next to *sarkar* Bihar in increase in revenue. A large number of production centres for saltpetre were located in Saran. The *parganas* showing a large increase are notably the ones with the largest saltpetre production.¹⁰⁰

Thus, we may conclude that no serious economic crisis preceded or accompanied the situation of disturbed agrarian relations and contested factional politics in Bihar. Consistent economic growth and prosperity in the region was, on the contrary, the context of the local political turmoil. Thus, for Bihar also it would be unfair to take the evidence of the imperial

⁹⁵Cf. Irfan Habib, *Atlas, op. cit.*, Sheets 10A and 10B.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, Sheet 10B

⁹⁷Shahnawaz Khan, *Ma'athur-ul-Umara*, English trans., by H. Beveridge, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 687–692; Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol. II; *Travels in Asia, 1630–34*, ed., R.C. Temple, London, 1914

⁹⁸J.N. Sarkar, 'The Saltpetre Industry of India with special reference to Bihar in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, 23, 1937, Part 3.

⁹⁹J.N. Sarkar, 'Advent of European Companies in Bihar', *Comprehensive History of Bihar*, pp. 602 and 603.

¹⁰⁰Irfan Habib, *Atlas, op. cit.*, sheet 10B; Susil Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 269–71

Mughal chronicles as the testimony for assessing the nature of Mughal decline in the province. If we extend, for example, the universalised account of either Bhim Sen or Khafi Khan to Bihar, it would look to be in the throes of a serious financial crisis with a wide gap between the estimated revenue and the actual yield and collections and, certainly, with an acute shortage of the lands to be assigned in *jagir*. A careful scrutiny of the evidence directly pertaining to Bihar little justifies such a dismal portrayal of the situation in the province. It would be unjust to infer or speculate that there was a general scarcity of *ser hasil jagirs* from the reports of shortfalls in income from areas disturbed by *zamindar* uprisings. *Ser hasil jagirs* and *zamindar* dissidence were not the same all around the empire. Their meanings diverged in different settings and therefore they must be studied in the context of a detailed history of the concerned regions. This may appear to be stating the obvious, but the current state of the debate requires that this point should be reiterated.

It needs to be emphasised that the Mughal imperial histories more than being a portrayal of the conditions of society in general, contain their assessment by a section of the ruling class. This section had hitherto enjoyed an almost overwhelming political and economic dominance and staked claim to still more privileges on the grounds of their having long been in state service. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, there had arisen some other sections, mainly of Indian ethnic stock, with equal, if not greater, claims to the resources, who succeeded at times in dislodging members of the erstwhile pre-eminent groups. This has sometimes been presented as *inqilab* (upheaval, reversal) and was manifested in the formation of the factions around *khanazads* (born in house) and *qadims* (old, ancient) on the one hand, and non-*khanazads* and *jadids* (new and upstarts) on the other.¹⁰¹ The compilers of these histories voice the view of the *khanazads* who, in their calculations, no longer received their due because of the rise to power of upstarts.

A review of the literature of the period would perhaps enable us better to appreciate what the eighteenth century crisis was and how it was articulated. We get the impression that all was in ruins from some of the poems of poets who lived in Delhi and observed the developments both within the city and in the empire in the period under review.¹⁰² But we equally know for sure that while the royal palace and the *havelis* of certain nobles were wanting in glitter, there were many others in Delhi itself to

¹⁰¹ For some evidence see M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, *op. cit.*, Chapter I; Satish Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 174–176 in the context of Nizam-ul-Mulk's Scheme of Reforms. This dimension of eighteenth century politics, however, needs a careful and thorough analysis.

¹⁰² Compare Naim Ahmad, ed., *Shahr Ashob* (Urdu), Delhi, 1968, pp. 43–48 and 54–76, for instance, for some of the eighteenth century such poetic compositions. See also Ghulam Husain Zulfikar, *Urdu Shairi ka Siyasi aur Samaji Pasmanzar*, Lahore, Punjab University, 1966, pp. 145–226. See also Frederick Louis Lehmann, 'The Eighteenth Century Transition in India: Response of Some Bihar Intellectuals', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1967, pp. 139–44 for some discussion on *Shahr Ashob*.

patronise generously the dancers, musicians and other artists who had hitherto performed only for the select in the royalty and nobility. Unique and precious things from all parts of the world still found their way into the *bazaars* of Delhi. And a lakh of rupees which a mother gave her son to make purchases were still spent in no time in Chandni Chowk.¹⁰³ The *hundis* from the *jagirs* of some nobles may have lost their value, but a single *mahajan* of the city still had enough money in the 1740s to help the Emperor, Muhammad Shah to meet the claims of the Persian invader, Nadir Shah.¹⁰⁴

More than the ruin of their class, these poets and their ilk, like the compilers of our histories, bewailed the rise in position of the ones they characterise as the mean and ignoble (*arazil*). The crisis of the society, as it was presented by an eighteenth century poet was that 'the jackals had replaced the lions', 'crows cawed in place of the songs of the nightingale' and 'riches were bestowed on dogs and donkeys.'¹⁰⁵ However, their resentment over the eighteenth century changes should not be explained merely in terms of their personal loss. They had a definite sense of certain social rules and administrative norms which in their belief sustained a just order. In the rise of 'unworthy people' they saw the neglect and violation of the time-honoured rules. An analysis of the nature of such consciousness and of the degree of its influence on Mughal historical literature is still awaited.¹⁰⁶

The portrayal of such shifts and reversals in the context of Bihar is available, for instance, in the works of Shah Ayatullah, an eighteenth century writer. Shah Ayatullah came from a Sufi family of Phulwari Sharif, a centre of Muslim education and Sufism, about six miles west of Patna. Ayatullah wrote both in Persian and Urdu, with pen names of Shorish in his Persian poetry and Jauhari in his Urdu compositions. In one of his Urdu poems, he complains about the changed and reversed times primarily in terms of the rise of the Hindus. According to him, the Brahmans had gained in status, the Muslims had turned mere *chakars* (servants) of the infidels and idolatory in temples was supplanting the Islamic worship of one god in the mosques.¹⁰⁷ The poem relates, as its reference to a Hindu

¹⁰³ Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-i-Dihli*, ed., with Urdu trans. and notes by Nurul Hasan Ansari, Delhi, Dept. of Urdu, University of Delhi, 1982, pp. 39 and 110, see also Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy's Introduction to their English trans. of the *Muraqqa* for a discussion on the state of art in Delhi in the years of Mughal decline

¹⁰⁴ Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Tazkira*, Sitamau transcript, pp. 104-106.

¹⁰⁵ Naim Ahmad, ed., *Shahr Ashob*, p. 76; Muhammad Sadiq, *History of Urdu Literature*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1984, pp. 104-105.

¹⁰⁶ For an excellent discussion on such consciousness in a comparable Ottoman context, see Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire. The Historian Mustafa Ali*, Princeton, 1986, pp. 191-231; also Douglas A. Howard, 'Ottoman Historiography and the literature of "Decline"', *Journal of Asian History*, 22.1, 1988.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79; S.M. Sadruddin Fida, *Hazrat Shah Ayatullah Jauhari. Un ki Hayat aur Shairi*, Patna, Dept. of Urdu, Patna University, 1964, pp. 527-528; Akhtar Orainawi,

subadar and a Hindu *diwan* suggests, to the period between 1748 and 1761 when Janaki Ram and Ram Narayan held the highest offices in Bihar and many of the erstwhile nobles and notables had lost their *in'ams*, the *jagirs* and the *wazifas*. Since Shah Ayatullah came from a religious background, he feared and presented desolation of Islam in the deprivations of Muslim nobles and notables. He complained in the main against the rise of the ignoble and the reversal of the times, in this case illustrated from the way Janaki Ram and Ram Narayan tried to set right the administration following Maratha inroads, the English East India Company's involvement in Bihar politics and subsequent disruptions. The Muslim religion at this juncture, as we know from other accounts, was in no particular danger in the province. Bihar gave shelter and promised protection and promotion of their fortunes to some of the erstwhile Muslim nobles' descendants who had left Delhi because of their sufferings in the wake of what they perceived as the arrogant rise and atrocities of the 'infidels' in that city and in its vicinity.¹⁰⁸

All this is not intended to delegitimise the use of imperial Mughal chronicles as testimony for the history of the period. The chronicles no doubt form the backbone of our evidence. But they are to be read together with all the other categories of sources, imperial and regional, to consider the particularities of both a geographical area and a social group. Before arriving at any generalisations and imposing a meaning of our own we should therefore examine what eighteenth century society took to be a 'crisis' and what it meant to its different segments. From such a re-examination, it may well emerge that the eighteenth century 'crisis' is too complex an issue to be understood through the mere analysis of Mughal revenue administration and finance.

Bihar men Urdu Zuban-o-Adab ka Irtuqa, Patna, 1957, pp. 264-267; Frederick Louis Lehmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-149 and Appendix 1.

¹⁰⁸ Shakir Khan, *Gulshan-i-Sadiq*, Patna MS., ff. 50-58 for the migration to Patna of the author who was a descendant of Khwaja Lutfullah Sadiq of Panipat, an important noble of Farrukh Siyar's time. See also Mir Hasan, *Tazkira-i-Shura-i Urdu*, ed., Habib-ur-Rahman Sherwani, Delhi, Anjuman-i-Taraqqi Urdu, 1940, p. 115 and Muhammad Husain Azad, *Aab-e-Hayat*, reprint, Lucknow, 1986, pp. 117-121 for Ashraf Ali Fughan who settled in Patna on Raja Ram Narayan's invitation and died there in 1772. Fughan, a foster brother of the Mughal emperor, Ahmad Shah (1748-1756), held a rank of 5000 *zat*. Later, Fughan became disgusted with Ram Narayan; but significantly there is no reference to the desolation of Islam in the *hajw* (calumny, satirical poem) he wrote against the Raja. For the text of his *hajw* see Naim Ahmad, ed., *Shahr Ashob*, pp. 52-53.

Work and leisure: Daily working hours of agricultural labourers, Nellore District, 1860–1989

M. Atchi Reddy

Department of Economics
University of Hyderabad

The subject of the length of the working day is completely neglected in the literature on the economic history of India,¹ though it forms an important component of the labourers' standard of living. Longer hours may mean greater exertion, and the schedule of leisure preference changes along with the length of the working day and the level of wages. However, there are data on this problem. This paper discusses the length of the working day for the district of Nellore during 1860–1989, and shows that there have been significant changes in this period, a finding likely to be true of many other areas also. Before discussing the sources used and our findings, it is necessary to draw attention to some general problems of measurement, and also to note the institutional features of the labour market in the district of Nellore.

Problems of Measurement

In the first place, figures of average hours of work are not a sufficient index of the level of exertion or volume of work, or of the wage rate per hour,

¹ There are occasional references to the length of the working day, but there has been no discussion of long-term changes in working hours in India.

Author's Note : This paper is based on my unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'The Agrarian History of Nellore: A Study of Selected Aspects', submitted to the University of Delhi, 1976. I am grateful to Dharma Kumar who encouraged me to write this paper and suggested a number of improvements in the previous drafts. I thank the numerous friends from Nellore District for their kindly permitting me to read their old records. Mr. M. Lakshminarayana took every care in typing; the responsibility is mine for any errors left uncorrected.

since the quality of labour and the intensity of its application vary from individual to individual even in the same operation and even for the same individual in different operations. For example, five hours of intense work can use up the same number of calories as eight hours of relaxed work. Therefore, the usual *ceteris paribus* assumption is particularly relevant here.

Second, the number of normal hours of work per day varies with climate, soil, crop, season and topography, not to mention environmental problems. The explanatory variables therefore should be carefully chosen and specified. A peculiar feature of agriculture is that the hours worked depend on many factors of a varied nature. There are, to begin with, certain basic natural elements over which man has no influence, and second, other factors which can be humanly controlled and modified.

Under the first category, the extreme limits for crop production are fixed by the climatic conditions of the region which determine the length of the growing season and the periods during which field work and harvesting are possible. The nature of the soil affects the work. While certain soils can be worked early in the spring and even soon after heavy rains, this is not true of others. The working hours are usually longer in light operations but shorter in strenuous operations like ploughing, baling of water and embanking. The type of farming together with the natural conditions determine the distribution of work over the year. The shorter the season for agricultural activity, the more pressing does the work become, and the longer are the working days. Within the season, the daily number of hours which can be worked in different parts of the world are fixed by the length of the daylight, mist, rain, storm, etc. On small farms, division of labour is not possible to the same extent as on large estates. The same worker has to do many different jobs in the course of the day, wasting time in changing from one to the other. Thus, the hours of work are usually longer on smaller farms than on larger ones.

The length of the working day even within the district varies from place to place, season to season and crop to crop. The working hours generally fall between sunrise and sunset; but in certain operations like irrigation and harvesting, the working hours are different. Sometimes the cool hours of the early morning and occasionally moonlit nights are also utilised for lift irrigation or threshing.²

The humanly controlled factors such as institutions and technological variations, are partly shaped in the long run by 'natural' factors; and 'natural' factors in turn sometimes might have been modified, (for example, by diverting a stream by bunding) leading to many complicated problems

² Threshing frequently started in the evening and lasted late into the night. After a small gap of sleep between 2 A.M. and 5 A.M. the operation continued into the next day until it was completed.

for any accurate estimation of the changes over time in the length of the working day.³

Institutional Features

Unlike industry, the hours of work in agriculture are not regulated by legislation. In fact, when the Government considered regulation by legislation of the working hours of the labourers in agricultural employment in the Madras Presidency, the proposal was vehemently opposed by the Commissioner of Labour, G.F. Paddison, who stated:

On the whole there is no articulate desire for any regulation of the hours of labour and it would be impossible to enforce such regulation even if it were insisted on.⁴

It was thought that the enforcement of any such law would lead to unnecessary rural frictions.

The local customs and traditions governed the working conditions of the rural labourers, including the average intensity and the approximate quantity of work to be turned out in a normal day. For work on piece wages, the supervisor or the *maistry*, who acted as the head labourer of the group that contracted the piece work, took decisions regarding the amount of work to be done and its intensity. However, it is likely that the volume of piece work in agriculture in Nellore district until 1950 was not very large; till then the employer decided on the length of the working day, the level of the emoluments, and especially compensation for the extra hours put in by individuals in consultation with the labourers. The *talamanishi* or head farm servant enjoyed some discretion in day to day regulations, subject to the overall control of the employer.

The length of the working day varied mainly with the type of labourer: in general, the annual farm servants of Nellore district had the longest working day and the casual daily labourers the shortest. The length of the working day and the confidence reposed in the labourer varied directly with the type of attachment; the stronger the bond, the longer was the day,

³ Existing institutions try to absorb the technological changes in many ways. In course of time, old institutions die out and some new institutions are created, depending upon the nature and extent of the new technology. The introduction of pumpsets, tractors and tube wells are some important technological changes while the diminution in the size of holdings, commercialisation of agriculture and casualisation of labour market are some of the institutional changes that helped to cut down the per capita working hours, M. Atchi Reddy: 'Labour Relations in Andhra Pradesh Agriculture, 1881-1981' *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 26,3, 1983, pp. 160-187.

⁴ Government of India, *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1927*, Vol. III, Evidence *Madras Presidency*, p. 313.

and the higher was the rate of compensation paid for the extra hours worked. Between these two extreme types were the different transitory types of agricultural labourers like *maletas* and *payakaris* who were employed for a month or a crop season. This means that a change in the respective proportions of the different types of labourers, *ceteris paribus*, resulted in a corresponding change in the average length of the working day. But it also happened that the length of the working day of each group of agricultural labourers changed over time. To take the changing composition first, the annual farm servants formed the majority of the male agricultural labourers up to the early 1920s, while the daily labourers far exceeded them after 1950.

The unlimited powers of the employers were checked by the scarcity of agricultural labourers in the nineteenth century and right upto 1925; to some extent they were also regulated by the active caste unions of the dominant groups of labourers. The rise of political consciousness after the 1930s led to the formation of unions that were affiliated to some of the political parties that had been active locally. Old caste unions were replaced by the new trade unionism among the rural labourers. The private records show that there were politically motivated unions that organised agitations in the agriculturally advanced tracts of Pennar delta since the late 1950s. Taking advantage of local political rivalries, some groups of labourers went on strike at the crucial periods of sowing and harvesting in some paddy growing villages of Pennar delta in 1968, 1972, 1977 and 1986. These are some of the villages where the employers are rich and mechanisation reached an advanced stage with the introduction of tyre carts, tractors, electrified pumpsets and mechanical harvesters. Labourers were brought from the outside villages in the early stages of such agitations, but later on workers forcibly prevented the outsiders. In the later part of the 1980s the situation changed slightly when many of the labourers from these villages began to migrate to the nearby towns in search of work and better living standards. There are indications, of late, that the volume of wage employment in agriculture of the affected villages is decreasing.

Given the type of labourer and the nature of operations, we do not find any difference in the length of the working day of the agricultural labourers for the post-1950 period between the two groups of villages, i.e., one with unions and agitations and the other without them (Most of these unions could attract only some members of the depressed castes; while the agricultural labourers in general belonged to a widely varied number of castes). Admittedly, most of the strikes were aimed at increased daily wage rates and none were directly related to the length of the working day. On the other hand, we came across some contrasting evidence in our recent field visits. Employers preferred to pay piece wages wherever feasible; or else they employed a large number of workers per day, or only for half

the day on many occasions and completed the operation within a few days. Many of them preferred to employ workers either in the forenoon or afternoon and pay one-half of the daily wage and felt this resulted in the reduction of wage costs. Many such part time workers happened to be small and marginal farmers too. It appears that once wages were raised by union action, the employers reacted by increasing the intensity of work, necessarily reducing the length of the working day.

Sources Used

Varied sources are used in our computations. Numerous private accounts, written agreements for both labour and tenancy, and temple accounts were freely used in addition to the official sources. Wherever possible the data have been cross checked, and the anomalies removed. While the official reports including wages census and population census proved helpful at the macro-level, the private sources are rich with details at the level of individual farms and villages.

Though agricultural labourers and their wage rates are occasionally mentioned in the reports of the District Collectors, particularly during the droughts and famines, no direct information on their daily hours of work is available from the official records upto 1860. Much, though often indirect, information is available for the years between 1860–80 from the Settlement Reports of 1870 and 1872, the Nellore District Manual of 1873, reports during the Great Madras Famine of 1876–78, and other reports like the detailed enquiry conducted by the Government in 1872 into the material conditions of the different classes of population in the various districts of the Presidency (Board of Revenue Proceedings, 11–11–1872). The population censuses, wages census and the special surveys conducted by the Government can be included under this broad category of official reports.

Non-official rural studies are a useful source. The earliest of them, relating to the villages of Nellore district and dating back to the early nineteenth century was by Vennelacanty Soob Row (1784–1839) a native of Ongole in Nellore district. His family maintained agricultural farms in the district while Soob Row, who worked as translator and interpreter in the Sadr Supreme Court of Madras, furnished in his autobiography a number of details about the working and living conditions of the rural population in this district.⁵

There are some other non-official village surveys and private studies that focused their attention on the agricultural workers, but they date only from the early 1920s.⁶ Working habits and rewards received by the tenants and

⁵ Vennelacanty Venkata Gopala Rao: *Vennelacanty Soob Row*, C. Foster & Co. Madras, 1873. (This was his autobiography published by his son).

⁶ There are possibilities of getting some information on this topic from the accounts/biographical

hired labourers in many villages of this district were noted in the studies of N.G. Ranga written between 1923 and 1941. His *Organisation of Indian Villages*, provided useful information about labourers and their working habits, though not the exact timings of the day.⁷ More detailed surveys for the 1940s are available in the studies of V.V. Sayana. Tallapalem village of Kavali taluk and Nandanavanam village of Udayagiri taluk are two such examples of the 1940s. Though he analysed a lot of such data from a number of other villages in the taluks of Kandukur, Kanigiri, Udayagiri and Kavali in his well known study on tenancy,⁸ it is not clear whether he conducted detailed surveys in all these villages. However, we can safely draw a few inferences from his studies about Nellore district. The widely prevailing written agreements between the annual farm servants and their employers were replaced by oral contracts. Also the permanent farm servants were replaced by the seasonal servants in many places. The *maletas* and *payakarīs* were still present in good numbers, but were a declining force. The food-grains market was active mainly due to the War, and the inflationary incomes of the 1940s led to increased demand for labour. There are a number of such non-official village surveys for the post-1950 period but few of them directly noted the length of the working day. Vennelakanti Raghavaiah noted the length of the working day of the labourers, but his work pertained chiefly to the Yanadi tribals.⁹ One of the most detailed studies where the length of the working day of the different types of labourers was specifically mentioned was the village survey of Annareddipalem (Kovur taluk) conducted in 1960 by the Agro-Economic Centre, Madras.¹⁰

Accounts maintained by the big temples contained numerous but indirect references to the length of the working day in different seasons and for a series of years.¹¹ Temples in the nineteenth century employed a large number of skilled and unskilled workers, most of whom were drawn from the cadres of tenants and agricultural labourers; both types usually got the same daily wages either in field work or in temple work. The temple accounts

sketches left by a number of distinguished persons of Nellore district that worked in the Madras city in the nineteenth century, for example, the families of Dampuris and Vavillas and a number of Chetties and Reddys. But a thorough search has to be made to unearth such accounts in Madras and Nellore.

⁷ N.G. Ranga, *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, Vol. I, Bezvada, 1926, and Vol. II, Bombay, 1929.

⁸ V.V. Sayana, *Sharing and Fixed Tenancy*, The Business Week Press, Madras, 1949; *Land Sales, Land Values and Land Transfers*, S. Chand & Co., Delhi, 1952.

⁹ Vennelakanti Raghavaiah, *The Yanadis*, New Delhi, 1962; *The Nomads*, Bharatiya Adimajati Seva Sangh, 1968.

¹⁰ 'Annareddipalem: A Village Survey', Agricultural Economics Research Centre, Madras, 1964 (Mimeo).

¹¹ M. Atchi Reddy, 'Rich Lands and Poor Lords: Temple Lands and Tenancy in Nellore district, 1860-1986', *Indian Economic and Social History Review (IESHR)*, 24, 1, 1987, pp. 1-33

noted not only their arrival in the morning and departure in the evening, but also the time of lunch, dinner, rest and the sleeping time too. Unduly long working days were often compensated in many cases by feeding the whole family of the labourer and by presentations of clothes and used utensils at the time of religious functions.

Private accounts maintained by many of the cultivating families of this district are an important and reliable source about the length of the working day. The length of the working day was directly incorporated in the service agreements of the permanent farm servants and seasonal workers, while we have to make use of indirect information from the day-books and attendance registers in the case of casual and daily workers.¹² The entries for the provision of meals and other perquisites that had often compensated for the extra working hours clearly identified the workers who strained through nights in the harvests, or who watched the crops and grain throughout the day and night against wild animals and pilferage. These registers also noted the part time workers, mostly from the artisan groups, and the time they started and ended operations, especially whenever they came later and left earlier than the other labourers.

The written agreements containing various types of labour and terms of contract are an additional and extremely useful source.¹³

The following one translated from Telugu is a sample of such agreements:

Agreement of Farm Services

Year = Vyaya ; Month = Jyestha (June 1886)

Day = Tenth day after the full moon

Place = Butchireddipalem Village, Nellore taluk, Nellore district

Employer: Landlord cultivator, Shri ... Reddy

Employee: Thirupalu of the shepherd caste of Gollas

Since you satisfied us by your abilities to undertake ploughing and other cultivation operations, we employ you as the annual farm servant from today onwards on an annual wage of two *putties* of paddy besides three meals a day and other usual perquisites given on festival days and other occasions. You are required to wake up at the first dawning sound of the cock [around 4 A.M.] draw water, feed the draught animals and get them ready for the day's operations by sunrise. You have to compensate

¹² M. Atchi Reddy, 'Wages Data from the Private Agricultural Accounts, Nellore District, 1893-1974', *IESHR*, 16, 3, 1979, pp. 301-321.

¹³ We collected about 480 such 'farm service agreements for the period of 1890 to 1967, containing a variety of provisions, rates of wages and conditions of work, leisure, leave, etc. The length of the day can be made out from them by the time of waking up, hours of lunch and supper and the duties to be performed after the sunset in the case of the annual servants.

us for any absence running into more than a week by extending the period of employment or else, the wages would be cut to that extent. Any dispute between us, if it arises, will be settled by the committee of elders of this village including those of your caste *panchayat*.

Witnesses

(1)

(2)

Agreed and signed by

1. Shri ... Reddy

L.T.I. of Thirupalu

The time of starting agricultural operations and their completion, intervals for meals, the time at which different groups and cadres of labourers reported at the employers' house and on the fields etc., are all noted clearly in the registers of attendance and meals accounts, while only the general terms of employment and work are furnished in the contract agreements. However, these types of data in detail were collected only for a limited number of farm families (for example, attendance registers of one employer each from fifteen villages were collected), and it is possible that there were variations in other villages, and with other employers of the same village too. But such marginal variations are unlikely to alter the direction of the trends over the long period considered here.

Among the private sources can be included an autobiography in manuscript form found with an octogenarian in the village of Musunuruvaripalem. It begins somewhere in the 1830s and ends in the early 1970s; its author gleaned the information through four of his preceding generations and compiled it from large stacks of palmyrah leaves.¹⁴ Among many other things, it facilitates the comparison of the length of the working day of the agricultural labourers before and after 1920, but one should be careful not to be carried away by the impressions of the employers which is what this autobiography records.

Reports about the working and living conditions of the agricultural labourers of the Madras Presidency upto 1953 (and Andhra Pradesh later) were available from newspapers like the *Madras Mail*, *The Hindu*, the *Indian Express* and other vernacular dailies. *The Andhra Patrika*, a Telugu daily published from Madras since 1909, and the *Zamin Ryotu*, a Telugu weekly published from Nellore since 1930, contained many such reports. But one should be careful in using such localised events reported by the correspondents who stayed in the towns; they sometimes reported a few rumours too. If we can filter these reports carefully, a lot of grass root level

¹⁴ The gentleman, now expired, who was a graduate showed me in the early 1970s a bulky bundle of manuscript, supposed to be the biography of his family dating from the early eighteenth century and dealing with numerous matters, most of them were closely connected with agricultural production and distribution directly or indirectly. In support of many events and statistics, he showed palmyrah bundles inherited from the ancestors written both in Telugu and Tamil scripts.

information and useful data can be separated. *The Madras Mail*, which was the earliest publication (it started in the 1830s) in the available series of old dailies, carried both news items and editorials about the agrarian conditions in this Presidency. The *Zamin Ryotu* devoted much of its space to the problems of the tenants and agricultural labourers of the old Nellore district. In fact, its main aim was to highlight their problems.

Trends in Working Hours

An over-all decline in the average length of the working day is evident in this district over the period 1860–1989, but the extent of change varies with the type of labourer. For the *talamanishi* and other annual farm servants and the daily labourers, the length of the normal working day was noted often in their contracts, both written and oral, verified and modified by the help of attendance registers and meals accounts. A large number of annual farm servants were residential right upto the First World War. Their *active* daily work started by about 5 A.M. and lasted until 9 to 10 P.M. as noted in the Settlement Reports of 1865–72 and private accounts of 1860–1918. They usually slept in cattlesheds, watching and feeding the plough-bullocks and other milch cattle in the employer's house, or sometimes watching the crops, cattle and sheep in the fields. It can be argued, from this angle, that they worked for their employer for a twenty-four hour day. Even though many of them were expert ploughmen, their general qualification was an all-round experience and capability to undertake all kinds of agricultural operations:

These [yearly] labourers perform all the ploughing; watch and water the crop; make up the bunds; prepare the threshing floor; stack the straw, and cart the manure to the fields as well. . . .¹⁵

Numerous instances are available, both direct and indirect, from the private accounts before 1920 about the farm servants drawing and fetching water, grass, and grain upto 9 P.M.; but we do not have information about any material compensation or leisure allowed in lieu of such extra work. It was one of the duties of the yearly servants to watch the flocks of cattle during nights, often together with the usual shepherd servants. Also they used to arrange special fencing facilities for the cattle in the fields during summer, working through the cool nights:

As the hot weather commences, tatties are made ... and pandals are constructed and closed towards the west, in order to afford the cattle

¹⁵ C. Rundall, 'Settlement Report of Nellore District, Principal Division, 1870', Government of Madras, Board of Revenue Proceedings No. 1399, dated 27 August 1872, para 113.

protection from the heat of the sun during the day, and also to shelter them from the land wind.¹⁶

It was invariable for the annual farm servants to feed the cattle by sleeping in or near their sheds for a period of three to four months in a year during the busy ploughing season.

Annual farm servants were involved in all operations of manuring, including collection, storing, carting and dispersion of manure on the fields; and also in different methods of manuring like flocking the sheep and goats or carting the leaves from the jungle or silt from the tank beds. Details in this respect were provided by the Deputy Director of Settlement in his report on the sub-division:

The ryots very often cart old village soil, 'pate' earth, or the silt and deposit of the tanks and ponds, when manure cannot otherwise be procured.¹⁷

To avoid the summer heat they used to cart out manure during moonlit nights and cool mornings. Sometimes the yearly labourers were sent in advance to gather the manure during the daytime; this was loaded on the carts during nights. No formal holidays were granted in lieu of such extra work, but they were compensated by increased amount of the usual perquisites or new gifts or loans. A few casual hands employed on these occasions were paid the usual daily rates.

Feeding the draught animals and preparing different types of feed both day and night was the responsibility of the yearly labourers; they soaked the horsegram and oil-seeds overnight, ground them into a paste early in the morning and mixed it with other ingredients for the morning drink of these bulky oxen. Also, the oxen and milch cows grazed on the pastures sometimes late in the nights during which time the yearly servants used to be in charge. These duties were routine and no reference to time was made in any official inquiry. The specificity of timings can be gleaned only from the private accounts, i.e., through the service agreements and the other registers of payment and frequently by their reference to the timing of the occurrence of events like thefts, fire and other disturbances.

Work timing was one of the conditions of service agreements concluded with the farm servants especially when they were from outside the village, and from far-off tracts. The servants were required to get up from their bed at the first cock crow, that usually falls about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours before sunrise. In none of the agreements is the time, when work ceases, mentioned, except for a clause at the end saying that 'all other conditions would be in accordance

¹⁶ C Rundall, 'Settlement Report of Nellore District, Sub-Division', 1872, Government of Madras, Board of Revenue Proceedings No. 1456, dated 31 August 1873, para 69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* *Tatties* are cattle sheds or fenced places, pandals or sheds with thatched roofs; *pate* means very old.

with the local customs; and the servant should excel his local counterparts'. Most of these agreements were brief and they used the same format with few changes upto 1925-28. A change occurred during 1929-36 when many non-local servants were thrown out of employment and the 'wake up time' was not mentioned in many agreements, most of which were concluded with the local annual servants.

The demand for the farm servants seems to have increased in the decade from 1940-50, a period of rising prices of foodgrains. This is suggested by the relaxation of many conditions from the agreements. It was enough if they reported for duty by sunrise 'unless it was otherwise required'. Agreements of the later period carried the clause, 'you should report early in the morning for duty', but the time was not specified. Agreements available after 1970 are only small pieces of paper and timings are not clearly mentioned in any of them.

The length of the working day can be made out indirectly from the nature and variety of the labourers' functions noted in the private accounts available for the first half of our period, i.e., 1860-1920. Annual farm servants were often sent as messengers to officials and to the employers' relatives. Annual farm servants in the employment of the village *munsifs* (headmen) and *karnams* (accountants) were frequently sent as messengers to the revenue headquarters in *tahsil* towns. There are cases where some daily labourers were hired for this purpose also but a specially high wage was paid in such cases.

Maletas or woman farm servants often accompanied the employers' daughters on their way to the villages of their in-laws, and they were rewarded with a jacket and other perquisites according to local traditions. Including domestic duties like sweeping the floor and feeding the milch cows, *maletas* worked upto twelve to fifteen hours a day during the busy seasons, in the villages of Butchireddipalem and Kalayakagollu upto early 1920s. But their working hours showed a steady decline afterwards and an especially sharp one after 1970.

There are instances where the farm servants, a selected few, went hunting, fishing and wood-cutting either late in the evening or during moonlit nights in many villages. They shared in the fish and game and got other rewards too for these extra hours of work, but the quantities are not clear. A cross-checking of their numbers from attendance registers in the private accounts of 1860-1920 shows that those who worked through nights were allowed a full day of leisure or they were put the next day in charge of light operations like watching cattle or scaring the birds.

The majority of the annual farm servants in this period, 1860-1920, were residential, even though the seasonal farm servants became a conspicuous group by 1890-1900; many of them were non-residents and their working day was far shorter than that of the resident servants. The active working

hours of the seasonal servants of this period both at home and in the fields often ranged around twelve. Their working hours can be placed in between those of the resident farm servants and those of the daily labourers, being nearer to those of the daily labourers after 1925. And the fall in the number of their working hours after 1930 closely resembled those of the daily labourers, showing that a number of them joined the daily labour market especially after 1940.

The female farm servants, especially grass-cutters, *maletas* and kitchen-maids were employed in good numbers in the nineteenth century (see Table 1). The female farm servants performed diversified activities both in the field and in their employer's house. Their daily hours of work were slightly less than those of their male counterparts. They attended to the field operations around 6 to 7 A.M and left the fields around sunset. Even though their average daily wages, or monthly salary, was often less than those of their male counterparts, their hourly (calculated) rate sometimes exceeded that of the male farm servants.

Table 1

Male and Female Agricultural Labourers in Nellore District:1881

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Casual Daily labourers	41,018	73,530	1,14,548
2. Herdswomen	23,255	3,091	26,346
3. Farm servants	25,726	1,200	26,926
4. Crop watchers	600	269	869
5. Shepherds	8,824	738	9,562
Total	99,423	78,828	1,78,251

Source: *Census of 1881 Madras Presidency, Vol. II, Talukwar Statements, Nellore district.*
Table XII-c. Government Press, Madras, 1883, pp. 93-94

It should be noted that the 1,200 female farm servants in Table 1 were annual farm servants. Male servants were noted as ploughmen as almost all of them were appointed under that main operation of ploughing.

Between 1860 and 1920, daily labourers worked a far shorter day than the residential annual farm servants. Most of them used to work only for nine to twelve hours a day depending on the seasonal requirements. This can be inferred from phrases like 'dawn to dusk' used in many reports to describe the agricultural work on the fields; work on some days lasted twelve hours or even longer. The length of the working day varied throughout the year and in the areas of the district, as the nature of cultivation work varied much from season to season and from area to area.

There were some operations which were usually undertaken during nights in this period and, in such cases, the daily labourers followed the

annual servants. Carting was one such operation; and especially in summer months carting was undertaken during nights. Marriage parties were transported during nights; grain was carted to the markets during nights and most of the temple festivals were celebrated with decorated carts during nights. Servants used to drive home the cattle purchased in far-off villages after travelling long distances continuously for days together. Also the most trusted among the farm servants along with the *maleta* were entrusted with the duty of accompanying the daughters of the employer coming from the villages of their parents-in-law; and they frequently carried numerous gifts for the relatives and officers following the directions of the employers.

In transplantation, daily labourers, worked from 6.30 A.M. or 8 A.M. to 6 to 7 P.M. with one or two meals; a midday-meal was invariably provided. A small group of them working along with the *maletas* started pulling out the seedlings early in the morning around sunrise and kept them ready in bundles by 8 A.M. Sometimes they continued the same operation throughout the day and got all three meals from their employer. This group also included the hardworking male labourers engaged in levelling, bunding and watering. Migrant labourers were engaged in the peak season of transplantation and their daily hours of hired work were longer than those of the local labourers. Timings were accurately recorded in the case of the migrant labourers of this period, i.e., 1860–1920, as they were regularly paid for any overtime and deductions were made for shortfalls.

Reaping and harvesting were the operations that employed a large number of daily labourers, including a considerable proportion of migrants. Reaping or cutting the crop was a daylight operation and lasted for not more than ten hours per day; while the length of the working day in harvesting depended upon a number of other factors. In times of rain or storm, or on moonlit nights, the working day varied between a half-day of five hours and a double working day of day and night. Daily labourers in such a season generally worked between twelve to fourteen hours a day. Hired male labourers worked longer than the female workers. Again, the migrants worked for longer hours than the native labourers, since they stayed either on the working spot or in the employer's house. It is clear that the longest working day in the year was during harvesting, and, of course, it was accompanied by the highest daily wages in the year. The migrants, in spite of their longer working hours, got less than the local labourers in the harvests, though the reason for this difference is not clear; probably it was intended to compensate for the extra hours of work the native labourers rendered through the year.

The average number of working hours were the lowest in weeding, varying from eight to nine between 1890 and 1920. One reason was the nature of the season. Weeding fell in September and October when there used to be occasional rain. Weeding work was started between 8 A.M. and

9 A.M. but came to an end around sunset at 5.30 P.M. and the labourers were busy around 5 P.M. in heaping and bundling their 'pullings' of the day, a part of which they carried home for feeding their cattle. *Maletas* too returned home along with them but arranged cattle feed in their employer's house and went back home after eating their supper. Few migrant labourers were engaged in weeding; the private accounts do not mention any such groups between 1860 and 1921, except a few that came from the nearby villages.

A number of casual labourers were usually employed by the temples for a variety of work, large numbers being employed in the summer months. A section of them were tenants on temple lands while others were directly hired from the market by the day or week. Their usual day started around 6.30 A.M. in the morning and often lasted upto 7 P.M. or 8 P.M. Men outnumbered the women but it is not clear whether they worked for such long hours due to their religious devotion, or whether this was the usual length of the working day even outside the temples but under similar conditions. These labourers worked mostly in the shade, sharing the food and other offerings made to the temple. However, the wages paid by the temple were often lower than the agricultural wages. This makes it further difficult to compare the length of the day in the temple with that outside. The engagement of large contingents of labour by temples sharply fell after 1949-50, as few records mentioned such engagements.

In addition to the farm servants and daily labourers, some others were hired as agricultural labourers for some days in the year. Their proportion steadily increased between 1860 and 1920. Cobblers, weavers, potters, barbers, washermen, story-tellers, (*dāsās*), musicians, shepherds, watchmen, pipers and blacksmiths are frequently mentioned as casual labourers in agriculture. Most of the women worked as day labourers while the men often helped in the harvests at nights. There was a special tribe called Yanadis, most of whom were employed as watchmen in this district, generally on a family basis. One or two Yanadi families were in full time employment of a big landlord, or one Yanadi family served more than one cultivating family as watchmen. Some of their womenfolk were employed as domestic servants too. Most of their wages were paid on a monthly or annual basis, as watching the crops and fields involved round the clock vigilance throughout the year.

The Yanadi labourers did a variety of jobs for their employers. They plied the country boats on lakes and rivers and they were engaged in fishing and fuel cutting. A sect of this tribe, called Reddi Yanadis, was employed mostly by the cultivators as watchmen on the fields as well as for cattle and houses while some of them were employed as herders and messengers.¹⁸ Raghavaiah observes that 'several Yanadi males run on errands sometimes

¹⁸ V. Raghavaiah, *The Yanadis*, op cit, p.117.

for long distances for which they are remunerated with free meals and three and a half seers of paddy per day'.¹⁹ They were also hired for cutting firewood and grass from the fields. Yanadis made the best swimmers and hunters and their services were used frequently for tracking thieves and their hideouts in the forests. They were expert collectors of the forest products including honey and medicinal herbs. They worked in some of the operations on 'round the clock' basis and were paid accordingly before 1930.

Most of the hand-pounding operations were skilfully performed by the Yanadis before 1930 when there were no rice mills or grinders. It was noted by Raghavaiah that 'in every village and from every ryot there was perennial demand for his services and the whole family would engage itself from early dawn till noon in this useful industry....'²⁰ They used to attend to other domestic works in the evening and drew their wages in different forms including paddy, rice, meals, gruel, old clothes and so on. Raghavaiah observes that 'the Yanadi women are always employed for scrubbing the floor, cleaning the utensils and generally for keeping the house as maid-servants and even as cooks'.²¹ Having their residential huts around their master's house or in his nearby fields, they were at his beck and call throughout the day; and the entire family usually drew its subsistence in such a variety of wages and gifts that an exact assessment in any case is not possible.

The invasion of their employment avenues by the modern rice-mills, grinders and other machines, the shrinking volume of employment available to them and the consequent shortening of the working day after 1940 are evident from a number of other sources.²²

Not much direct evidence is available from any official report about the length of the working day of self-employed workers such as artisans in their own professions, though a lot of information, both direct and indirect, about their work habits in agriculture is available from private accounts. There are a number of cases where the needy artisans of the village worked as agricultural labourers during the day and pursued their caste callings during nights; they also helped in the busy harvests in the nights and shared in the high wage rates.

Most of these artisan/casual labourers came from the 'attached families' in the *jajmani* system supplying traditional services to the cultivating families. It is not mentioned whether customary obligations included agricultural labour; but it is clear from the private accounts that they were paid separate

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

²² They include P.C. Reddy, 'A Study of Yanadis (1945), unpublished, and A. Aiyappan, *Report on the Socio-economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras*, Government of Madras Press, 1948

wages for their agricultural labour, along with similar casual labourers. Their working hours seem to be shorter than those of the other daily workers, as it is mentioned in the accounts that they joined the main workers at noon, afternoon, or evening; and their wages were computed accordingly.

There is no ground in general to expect a different trend in the case of female labourers, but there did exist a difference of degree. Female annual servants were not many but a number of them were attached as *maletas* who worked along with the male farm servants for extra hours or even during nights in the harvesting season. It was usual for kitchen-maids to work for late hours in the night even upto 11 P.M. A working day of twelve to fifteen hours was usual in the case of kitchen-maids but they did have some free time in between.

Other operations undertaken by the female annual servants, like grass cutting, crop watching, and domestic service also underwent considerable changes after 1920 and the active working day was shortened even for *maletas*. The proportion of *maletas* in the total female labour force declined sharply after 1950; the number of *maletas* declined again after 1970; casual workers, it should be remembered, always worked shorter hours than the attached servants.²³

A large variety of indirect evidence is available from the private accounts indicating the setting of a declining trend roughly from the decade of the 1930s and sharply after 1970s, though there were ups and downs earlier. A number of the indicators can be grouped under the following main heads: (a) the nature of work; (b) meals and perquisites; (c) comparison with other labourers whose working hours are definitely known; (d) regional proverbs, customs and traditions. These details of individual villages go a long way in supporting the general trends analysed above.

(a) *Nature of the work*: One hundred years ago the nature of the work of an agricultural labourer differed greatly from that which he does at present. Draught animals were used in lifting and baling of water from wells till the 1920s; operations on the fields used to begin in the morning and lasted till the evening, for, frequently, the right to use the well passed on the next day to a different cultivator. This had been the common practice till recently in some of the western *taluks* like Udayagiri, Kanigiri, Darsi and Podili, particularly in the non-electrified villages. The duration of many operations, for instance watering, has been reduced, and the operation itself has become light with the installation of oil engines in the 1940s, and further, by the installation of the electric motors on a large scale in the 1960s and 1970s.

(b) *Meals and perquisites*: Most of the daily labourers used to get two meals a day before 1939. In Butchireddipalem (1860–1921), 'second sort' rice in specified quantities was allotted towards the meals of the labourers

²³ M. Atchi Reddy, 'Female Agricultural Labourers of Nellore, 1881–1981', *IESHR*, 20, 1, 1983, pp. 67–79

as it was cooked in a separate kitchen. The labourers were invariably given two meals a day, i.e., breakfast and lunch, during the season for sowing, transplantation and weeding which lasted from July to October. They used to gather in the fields by 7 A.M. at the latest to get breakfast. The practice was the same in Vavilla (1909–39) and Indupur (1907–39). It seems that many of the male daily labourers in the latter villages used to work even after 6 P.M. in the fields and got their night meals as well. There are many references in the accounts to the quantity of rice spent towards the provision of night meals to the male daily labourers who worked late in the night or those who watched the fields and grain in the nights along with the annual farm servants.

(c) *Comparison with other labourers*: There are many references in the private accounts before 1921 to occasions when some casual male labourers used to work along with the annual farm servants from dawn to dusk, and were also fed along with them. Many of the female casual labourers used to accompany the *maletas* to the fields as early as 6 or 7 A.M. and were given both breakfast and lunch. Such female labourers in the village of Vavilla were commonly employed in the operations of sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting. But there is no evidence anywhere of the daily female labourers receiving night meals.

The male daily labourers in Indupur (1907–39), were invariably given three meals a day when they were less than ten in number in any operation that lasted more than ten or twelve hours. Whenever the number exceeded this, the operation was certainly one which involved both sexes, and the common practice was to provide two meals; only lunch was provided to those who attended work after 9 A.M.

(d) *Regional Proverbs, Customs and Traditions*: There are some revealing regional proverbs and sayings. 'Udayana Vachina Varike Chaddi Annam' (those who attend in the dawn alone are eligible for breakfast) is a common saying throughout the district. The author came across another saying in the Pennar delta : 'Proddu Krunkete Pootannam', which means those labourers who continue to stay in the fields after the sunset will get an extra benefit of a meal. This refers to the night meals.²⁴

The tedious agricultural practices before 1939 required such long hours of work that the casual daily labourers almost always worked for ten to eleven hours a day. The annual farm servants and *maletas*, being very common in this district, were in charge of supervising the casual daily

²⁴ Even though I noted most of these from my observations in the field, some literary sources can be consulted for further details; such as Charles Philip Brown, *Telugu-English Dictionary*, reprint, New Delhi, 1979, Nellore Zillah Vyavasaya Samethalu (in Telugu) Government Press, Madras (n.d) possibly 1916. We avoided the use of folk-songs and folk-tales even though they talked of the timings of different operations and length of the days worked out by a variety of agricultural labourers in the villages of this district. Their internal contradictions and exaggerated forms made them doubtful to be used here

labourers. The annual farm servants who used to work from dawn to dusk always tried to get the daily labourers to their employers' fields as early in the morning as possible. As many of the casual labourers were attached to the employer, they knew in advance the type of work to be done and meals, wages and perquisites to be given.

The system of giving two or three meals a day is still in practice in this district, but only to a few classes of labourers in some of the villages. In the *taluks* of Kanigiri, Kandukur, Udayagiri and Atmakur, it is said, only the ploughmen who were hired for the day worked from dawn to dusk or from 5.30 A.M. to 8 P.M. and got three meals. Some of the daily labourers employed for pulling up the seedlings early in the morning (in order to facilitate transplantations after 9.30 A.M.) were provided with breakfast during the transplanting season.

There are numerous instances in the private accounts maintained between 1910 and 1917 where the daily wages of some groups of labourers were reduced marginally since they left the fields when the evening sun was far above the horizon.²⁵ It is known that such groups after 1930 were in fact larger than what the employer required, but the labourers agreed to a reduced wage in view of the difficulty of procuring employment for the additional members of their families or groups. Most of the harvesting operations were also completed in the daytime, and a number of annual farm servants were free to attend the street dramas in the months of January and February. The number of migrant labourers to the villages of the Pennar delta fell sharply, while many labourers from the delta villages migrated to Madras city after 1930.

Some contrasting and notable changes occurred between 1918 and 1923. This is the period when a number of daily labourers turned into farm servants but in many cases they did not stay on the farm. There emerged a new class of non-residential farm servants who worked along with the annual farm servants throughout the day but retired to their own homes in the evening. The fixed part of their emoluments or *pettubadi* was somewhat lower than those of the residential servants of the same efficiency, while there were different arrangements regarding the provision of their meals. Some of them got all their three meals from their master while a few of them ate none in their master's house but were compensated fully by a meals allowance; in between there were arrangements of one or two meals from their master and so on. The period of attachment differed from three to nine months in a year and the meal allowance was paid frequently by the month or fortnight. Later on this new category was either integrated into the seasonal servants or disappeared completely from many villages. The explanation is found in

²⁵ The local usage in Telugu ran like this:

If the sun is above the western horizon by a fathom it is 4 p.m.; if it is above the western horizon by a hand's length it is 5 p.m. (the lengths are apparent).

the fast changing agricultural practices and reduction in the size of the operated holdings.²⁶

Fairly reliable data and information about the length of the working day of the agricultural labourers are available from both official and unofficial sources for the post-Independence period; the reduction in daily working hours is evident. A statutory limit of eight hour ceiling has been imposed through various minimum wage laws beginning with that of 1948 in the old Madras Presidency. Also, a number of labour organisations in the district wished to share the limited amount of work by reducing the length of the working day through the extension of the lunch break and by reducing the working day at both ends, i.e., starting late in the morning and closing early in the evening. The increasing number of recreations like cinemas, radios, televisions and video shows increased the value of leisure to the worker. On the other hand, the introduction of machines like tractors and pumpsets, decreased the demand for labour hours. This general fall applies not only to hired labourers but to all types of agricultural workers.

A working day of eight to eleven hours for the annual farm servants was reported during 1956–57 from a number of villages of this district:

In view of the longer working days in agriculture, a 'norm' or 10 hours was fixed as constituting the normal working day, and a person who worked for three-fourths or more of this 'norm' was taken to have worked with full intensity.²⁷

This seems to be a more reasonable figure than that provided in the monthly wages census for the farm servants between 1951 and 1960 (seven to eight hours) when compared to the information available from the private records of these villages in this period. The returns of wages census also failed to record the changes towards the shortening working days after 1970.

The superior type of annual farm servants who were chiefly ploughmen, the *sedyagallu* of Annareddipalem, used to work from 8 A.M. upto 5 or 6 P.M. while the inferior type servants, the *kadupukutivandlu*, worked from 5 A.M. to 6 P.M.²⁸ Both types used to work from 6 A.M. to 5 P.M. in Yelamanchipadu.²⁹ There was a lunch break of one hour, in all cases, usually from 12 noon to 1 P.M.

From the agricultural accounts maintained between 1941 and 1978, in

²⁶ Land-man ratio in Nellore district came down from 4.39 acres per worker in 1951 to 2.58 acres per male agricultural worker in 1971 (see M. Atchi Reddy, 'The Agrarian History of Nellore: A study of Selected Aspects', Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Delhi, 1976, Table 17.1).

²⁷ *Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry, 1956–1957*, Vol. III, Andhra Pradesh, p.43.

²⁸ *Annareddipalem Village Survey*, Agro-economic Centre, Madras, 1964, para 3.5.

²⁹ *Yelamanchipadu Village Survey*, Census of India, 1961, Vol. II, A.P. Village Survey Monographs, No. 23, p. 31.

Vavilla (1940–1960), Indupur (1940–1960), and Kalayakagollu (1954–1978), it is seen that rice was allotted generally only for lunch and in a few cases for breakfast or night meals too in the case of casual daily labourers. The daily labourers, according to oral evidence, turned out in the fields only after 9 A.M. and still later after 1967. There has been considerable bargaining over hours of work and rates of wage after 1967, which has settled to a solution of increasing the rates of wage but work was stopped at midday at 1 P.M. and one-half of the daily wage was paid. There is a conspicuous change in the length of the working day put in by the casual daily labourers in the district between 1950 and 1990. But the monthly wages census continued to record the normal working hours to be eight hours and in some cases, seven hours³⁰ even though a working day of five to six hours and many one-half days is discernible from the private accounts after 1970. The author found in tours to this district (1971–89), that seven to nine hours was the normal working day in the 1970s while it came down to six to seven hours in the late 1980s in the case of daily labourers; it became the accepted norm to work for three to four hours upto noon and accept half of the day's wages. In a few cases when it exceeded this limit, the early morning labourers were given breakfast as an extra benefit. Six to seven hours became the normal working day in transplantation for daily labourers in delta villages in 1988–89. Many labourers whom the author met between 9.45 and 10.30 A.M. during 1988 and 1989 in some of the delta villages like Kovur, Butchi, Indukurpet and Mypad argued that they would not work for more than seven hours a day on the fields, which they said was the rule of the Government. However, in some other villages he saw four labourers who were going to the fields as early as 6.30 A.M.; they said that they did not have any restriction on their working hours and as they were ploughmen they could get breakfast too, besides being paid at the ordinary rates. This was at a dry village in the *taluk* of Darsi.

Causes of Fall

To sum up, the length of the working day fell sharply for all types of labourers after 1920 and was especially noticeable after 1967 in the case of daily labourers. Throughout, attached or long-term labourers worked longer hours than casual labourers, but the proportion of the former fell sharply after the early 1930s; thus accentuating the fall in the average length of the working day. Speaking about agricultural labour as a whole, experienced landlords and labourers gave me the several reasons in 1989 for the fall in the number of working hours.

³⁰ Wages figures published in *Season and Crop Reports* of Government of Madras State, 1949–50 to 1951–52, Government of Andhra State, 1952–53 to 1955–56, and Government of Andhra Pradesh since 1956–57 and upto 1987 are available.

In the first place, the farmers or employers, themselves were sturdier than the present generation. They used to rise early in the morning before 5 A.M.; consequently the residential farm servants used to follow their masters. Even in the few cases where they are residential even now, the actual number of active working hours has declined as their masters began to get up late in the morning.³¹ Second, most of the annual farm servants, in the nineteenth century and later, used to sleep in or near their master's house, so that they were in his service for twenty-four hours a day, watching the fields, crops or other belongings. But nowadays with increased family and social functions, they wish to spend as much time as possible in the village or outside. Consequently many of the annual farm servants were non-residents after 1940. Third, labourers before the 1920s, along with the other members of their master's families, used to have a sufficient quantity of cold rice (*Chaddi Annam*) as their breakfast which enabled them to work for long hours without feeling hungry. But nowadays most of them take coffee or tea or a light tiffin of *idli* or *dosa* which cannot keep them actively working for more than a few hours. And the non-residential farm servants frequently cannot get strong and sufficient meals from their own homes due to poverty and economy. Fourth, there had been no entertainments in the olden days except a rare drama in the street or *Veedhibhagavatam* or *Veedhinatakam* which was staged only late at night. Cinemas, dramas, radios, televisions and videos are available for them now to watch at many places. A number of employers reported that most of their coolies and servants wanted to leave the fields between 4 and 6 P.M. in order to go to a movie in the nearest town or to hear the radio in the village or watch television.

Employers mentioned that the labourers saw a watch or watched the buses on the roads, and pointed to the exact time to stop the day's work, and it became very difficult to retain them after normal hours; on a few occasions, however, this could be done by paying extra wages. A number of labourers justified the shortening of the working days as their share of spoils flowing from the alleged waiver of farm loans by the Government.³²

With the cessation of meals and perquisites, and the disappearance of attached labourers, bargaining has become common in the labour market, and wages fluctuated widely from year to year and often in the same season too, as indicated by the market rate of daily wages noted in the private agricultural accounts after 1950. Some of the labourers began to choose their employers only on the morning of the day of work. Politicisation of

³¹ Evidence from three employers and twelve labourers aged between 50 and 80 years in Butchireddipalem.

³² A number of poor workers expressed their anguish that they were not among those lucky persons who were eligible for loan waivers as a result of the policy of the Janata Dal Government at the Centre.

rural life and the licensed liquor sales added to the rural tensions and shortening of the working days.³³

During 1981–89, it has been reported from the delta villages that the labourers waited frequently even until 11 A.M. to see what wage rate was fixed that day and some of them were employed from 1 P.M. onwards and got only one-half of the daily wage.

It is often stated that the labourers worked for longer hours as the crops in the delta areas are more labour intensive than the dry areas of the district. But field work showed that the opposite is true at present. The reasons for longer hours of work in different operations of the dry areas are clearly reported. Dry ploughing can conveniently be done for longer hours as there is no problem of water coming in the way. The draught animals in the dry area being stronger, they can plough from dawn to dusk with a small interval in between.

Transplanting in the dry areas is practiced only in the case of garden crops such as *ragi* and *sazza*. As sowing and transplantation have to be finished within the limits set by nature (rain and dew), they work for longer hours in order to finish it in time. On the other hand, labourers do not work for longer hours during sowing and transplantation in the irrigated tracts except under the contract system.

Water has to be baled out from the wells in the dry areas from morning till evening, and sometimes continued even late at night. Though watering is a twenty-four hour affair even in the deltas, it is being done by a salaried servant and it does not involve any hard labour nor would it provide work for additional coolies as in the case of baling (*kapila*). However, the labourers in reaping and harvesting in the deltas work for longer hours than their counterparts in the dry areas.

Paddison noted that the Madras labourer used to work for longer hours than the labourers in the other parts of the country. To quote his statement from the *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India* (1927):

In one district the workers wait till the morning mists are cleared before starting, in another in the day heat of the East or the Deccan they start earlier to have a longer time off in the burning heat. The Madras labourer works long hours but works fairly leisurely. The whole family often set out together for the fields, the baby is strung from the branch of a tree watched by one of the elder children, while the father and mother are at work.³⁴

³³ Public sales of toddy and liquor were prohibited in Andhra Pradesh before 1970, but afterwards the Government began to auction licenses to open the shops

³⁴ Government of India, *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1927, op.cit* Paddison, as Commissioner of Labour and Director of Settlement in the Presidency, might have drawn from the numerous settlement reports (he compiled the resettlement report of Nellore District in 1906) and other inquiries that noted the length of the rural working day in different tracts of the Presidency.

The natural conditions and the traditional institutions of this Presidency favoured longer working days when compared to the northern regions of India.

It is seen from the foregoing analysis that the number of hours of work put in by an average agricultural labourer per day had steadily declined over the last century or more in two ways. In the first place, the length of the working day of all types of labourers has been shortened. Second, the number of residential annual farm servants whose daily working hours had always been far more than those of any other category of labour, formed more than one-half of the male agricultural labour force before 1900. After 1940 most of them became non-residential servants; they were reduced to a small number after 1971. This has resulted in drastic reduction in the per capita hours of work per day put in by the average agricultural labourer at present in the district of Nellore. The real wage per day has also fallen but the proportionate fall in their hourly real wages was averted to some extent by the declining number of hours worked per day. Thus the fall in the daily wage rate apparently exaggerates the decline in the labourers' welfare since there is ample evidence that leisure has a positive value to them.

Factions, interests and messianism : The politics of Portuguese expansion in the east, 1500—1521

Luís Filipe F.R. Thomaz

Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Portugal

The history of Portuguese expansion in the East is often regarded as an almost linear process of development, the gradual putting into effect of a pre-existent plan for the economic and political domination of the Indian Ocean. The inflections of such an imperialistic project are seldom noted, and if noted are ascribed to a sort of progressive realisation of the real situation on Asian shores. Moreover, the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* is viewed as an entity constantly in opposition to external forces, but virtually without contradictions within it.

This vision of things is largely inspired by the contemporary Portuguese chronicles, which on the one hand prudently skirt the internal conflicts within Portuguese society, and on the other hand emphasise the idealistic side of the common endeavour to prosecute transcendental aims, such as Faith and Empire. However, we have good reasons to believe that, at least in the fifteenth century, external expansion itself was carried out as a means to defuse an internal crisis in Portugal; both before and after this historical moment, the historiography of expansion has also been used for the same purpose.

Marxist-inspired historians have already pointed to the role of class struggle in the genesis of Portuguese expansion. Curiously, they have not attempted to extend such an analysis into the sixteenth century, perhaps because the clan and factional strife which seems to predominate then does not fit well with the theoretical pre-suppositions of the school. Taking one thing with another then, the 'holistic' view that usually prevails in most accounts seems to be insufficient to explain many of the details, facets and

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characteristics of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century. This paper attempts therefore to reconsider some of these features in the light of the internal contradictions within Portuguese society, which seems to permit a more balanced as well as a more dynamic view of this history.

It has often been noted that Portuguese policy changed to an extent in the transition from one reign to another, owing both to the character and ideas of each sovereign, and to the process by which his entourage was formed. On the other hand, conflicts of parties and changes of ruling influences within the *same* reign have been seldom noticed. In part, it is a clash of precisely this latter kind amongst court factions that explains the gap between the voyage of Bartolomeu Dias, which opened the door to the Indian Ocean to the Portuguese in 1488, and that of Vasco da Gama, which actually reached India ten years later.

At first, the great official project which underpinned Portuguese expansion was the conquest of Morocco, and we have good reasons to believe that the maritime discoveries were, at their beginning, conceived as an enveloping manoeuvre, as well as a means to enter into contact with Prester John, the King of Ethiopia, and to set up an alliance with him.¹ This first project of expansion, which dated roughly from the end of the thirteenth century, was never fully carried out, partly because other projects arose in the meanwhile, which divided the forces, the means and the opinions; but it kept its prestige, owing chiefly to the resonances with the tradition of the Crusades and of the Peninsular *reconquista*. Until the disaster of El-Kser el-Kebir in 1578, the conquest of Morocco was regarded as a kind of 'reserve project' and as an alternative to the expansion in the East. At least twice during the sixteenth century—once in 1542, and again in around 1570—the possibility of giving up the *Estado da Índia* in order to undertake the conquest of Morocco was seriously discussed by Portuguese intellectuals and even in the royal council.²

From this project, another, akin but larger, gradually developed during the second half of the fifteenth century: the complete conquest of North Africa and of the Mamluk Sultanate, including, of course, Jerusalem.³ To prosecute this venture, even more than the earlier project, an alliance

¹ See Charles R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825*, London, 1969; also Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Expansão portuguesa e expansão europeia. Reflexões em torno da genese dos descobrimentos', *Studia*, no. 47, 1989.

² Otilia Rodrigues Fontoura, *Portugal em Marrocos na época de D. João III: Abandono ou Permanência*, unpublished thesis, Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, 1966; Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, Vol. III, (1495–1580), 2nd edition, Lisbon, 1980, pp. 19–24, 39–42, *passim*.

³ Cf. Mário de Albuquerque, *O significado das navegações Causas da conquista de Ceuta*, Doctoral thesis, University of Lisbon, 1930; Alexandre Lobato, 'Sociologia política da expansão e outros ensaios', in *Revista do Gabinete de Estudos Ultramarinos*, no. 16, 1957;

with Ethiopia was vital. Nor was it possible without lasting peace and even cooperation with Spain, whose rights to the conquest of present-day Algeria and Tunisia were recognised. This was undoubtedly the idea of Dom Manuel (r.1495–1521), and very probably had already existed in embryonic form during the reign of his predecessor Dom João II (r. 1481–1495).

But in the meantime, the process of discovery of the west African coast had evolved from strategic manoeuvre into mercantile enterprise. In the Atlantic zone, south of the Canary Islands, Portugal enjoyed optimal conditions for trade; by the treaties of Alcaçovas–Toledo (1479–81) and Tordesilhas (1494), Spain was excluded from these waters; the Papal Bulls of 1455–56 had already forbidden the interference of other Christian powers, and the ‘Moors’ were confined to caravan trade in the hinterland, quite far from the coast.⁴ In such conditions, commerce appeared, to large sections of the Portuguese ruling classes, to be a form of expansion which was safer and cheaper than warfare, and the south Atlantic seemed to be the best field for the spread of Portuguese interests.

Looking back to earlier moments in Portuguese history, one may note that as early as the regency of D. Pedro (1439–49)—who was supported by urban interests against the landed aristocracy—this current of opinion had already dominated; however, under the direct rule of D. Afonso V (1449–81), warlike enterprises in Morocco regained favour. Presumably the ‘mercantile’ party prevailed again in the court after the expedition of Bartolomeu Dias, hindering the organisation of further voyages. We are certainly aware that this party dominated the royal council at the beginning of D. Manuel’s reign from the testimony of the chronicler João de Barros; but then, the personal and somewhat autocratic intervention of the sovereign changed the course of events.⁵

D. Manuel appears to have been strongly influenced by the Messianism of his educators and later on by some of his advisers such as Duarte Galvão, who were imbued with Joachimite ideas. His accession to the throne after the death of six better-placed candidates seems to have reinforced their beliefs concerning D. Manuel’s predestination to great deeds,

Ch.-M. de Witte, ‘Un projet portugais de reconquête de la Terre-Sainte (1505–1510)’, *Actas do Congresso Internacional da História dos Descobrimentos*, Vol. V, (1), Lisbon, 1961, pp. 419–449.

⁴ Bull Romanus Pontifex, dated 8–1–1455 of Nicholas V, in *Monumenta Henricana*, 15 Volumes, Coimbra 1960–1974, Vol. XII, no. 36, pp. 71–79, confirmed by the Bull Inter Caetera of Calixtus III, of 13–2–1456, in *ibid.*, no. 137, pp. 286–288. For a discussion, also see Ch.-M. de Witte, ‘Les Bulles pontificales et l’expansion portugaise au XVe siècle’, *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique*, no. 51, Louvain, 1956.

⁵ For an excellent general account, see Manuel Nunes Dias, *O Capitalismo Monárquico Português (1415–1549): Contribuição para o estudo do capitalismo moderno*, 2 Volumes, Coimbra, 1963–1964; also see Luís Filipe Thomaz, ‘O projecto imperial Joanino: Tentativa de interpretação global da política ultramarina de D. João II’, in *Actas do Congresso Internacional sobre Bartolomeu Dias e a sua época*, Porto, Vol. I, 1989.

especially against the foes of the Holy Faith. Also, they were convinced that the King was directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, which gave him force even against the majority of his council.

It is important to note that even as the projects for land-bound conquest had split into two plans—the conquest of Morocco, and that of the Mamluk Sultanate—the projects for mercantile and maritime expansion too had a tendency over time to devolve into two lines: first, to strengthen the Portuguese thalassocracy within the Atlantic, and second, to extend the Portuguese network into the Indian Ocean. The latter strategy was clearly supported by the Genoese and Florentine merchant communities settled in Portugal, who earnestly desired to compete with Venice in the spice trade.⁶

Since the Middle Ages, the desire to control this trade had been inextricably mixed up with crusading plans; here, the idea was not to bypass the Red Sea route, but rather to master it. Interest in Asian spices seems absent from the initial phases of Portuguese expansion, whose main concern was with gold, slaves and other African goods. The first known references to the possibility of creating an alternative route for Asian spices are contained in a letter written by a Florentine cosmographer, Toscanelli, to a Portuguese canon in 1474; his plan, however, was not to sail around Africa, but rather to circumnavigate the globe, sailing straight towards the west. As is well-known, this idea was embraced a few years later by Columbus, but discarded by D. João II. The latter was as interested in dominating the route to the Indian markets as the Florentines were, but preferred the Cape route. We may infer this from the very fact that in 1486 he sent an embassy to Ethiopia, and another to Calicut, Hormuz and Sofala, a fact that clearly demonstrates that his plan was two-pronged: on the one hand, alliance with Prester John for the conquest of the Mamluks; and on the other, participation in the Indian Ocean trade.⁷

Such were the aims of Vasco da Gama's expedition, eventually despatched by D. Manuel in 1497, as is clear from the famous sentence of the Portuguese exile at Calicut: 'We come in search of Christians and Spices'.⁸ The first part of this sentence, which has quite often been misinterpreted, cannot allude to the Portuguese desires for evangelisation, since, until 1501, India was believed, in Portugal, to be peopled mainly by Christians; rather, it refers to the search for potential allies in the crusading plans of D. Manuel. This is given further credence by the list of military

⁶ On these communities, see Charles Verlinden, 'La colonie italienne de Lisbonne et le développement de l'économie métropolitaine et coloniale portugaise', in *Studi in Onore di Armando Saporì*, Vol. I, Milan, 1957; also C.M. Radulet, 'Girolamo Sernigi e a importância económica do Oriente', *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra*, 1984, pp. 67–77; Virgínia Rau, 'Um Florentino ao serviço da expansão ultramarina portuguesa: Francisco Corbinelli', *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, Vol. IV, 1974, pp. 107–141.

⁷ Cf. Thomaz, 'A Política imperial de D. João II', *op. cit.*

⁸ Álvaro Velho, *Roteiro da primeira viagem de Vasco da Gama (1497–99)*, Lisbon, 1960, p. 40.

forces which could be raised by each 'Christian' kingdom in India, which forms the epilogue to the 'Diary' of Da Gama's voyage.⁹

D. Manuel's plans for the conquest of the Near East are seldom referred to in contemporary documents, a fact that has often misled historians, but which can be explained by several factors: first, unlike the establishment of commercial relations, it was a long-term project, not an immediate one; second, it was deemed preferable not to publicise it too much, in order not to alarm the Mamluk kingdom, as well as in view of the other European sovereigns who desired the possession of Jerusalem for their own part; finally, such views were partaken of only by a narrow circle around D. Manuel and it was seen as unsuitable to stir up further opposition.

So, the first Portuguese expeditions to India remained somewhat ambivalent and D. Manuel appears to have consciously fostered this ambiguity. When the voyage of Pedro Álvares Cabral revealed the true religious geography of India, and disclosed the real extent of Muslim power in the Indian Ocean, once again the opposition to the 'eastern policy' of D. Manuel surfaced in his council; but once again, as an enlightened sovereign, D. Manuel decided against the wishes of the majority of his council to carry on. The elasticity of the political system in this period still supported this new autocratic measure. Besides, we can assume quite plausibly that a sort of tacit agreement existed between the partisans of the crusade-like enterprise and the factions interested in the pepper and spice trade, such as the Italian merchant communities of Lisbon. For the latter, the spice trade was the final goal, whereas for the King it may have appeared more as a means to secure liquidity, which could then be used for multifarious purposes, including improving his readiness for war. Also, the Cape route, which must have appeared to the Italians as a once-and-for-all innovation, was seen by the King and his close supporters as provisional and reversible, since it would logically vanish as soon as Egypt had been conquered. It is noteworthy in this context that whilst the idea of bypassing the Red Sea route was, in 1500, still a new one, that of an economic blockade of Egypt was centuries old: it had first been decreed by Pope Alexander III in 1179, and thereafter renewed several times and defended successfully by Henry II, King of Cyprus (1285-1324), Charles II of Naples in 1291, Fidenzio di Padova, Marino Sanudo (1309), William Adam (1317) and so on. But it never became effective, chiefly because it was a double-edged weapon, which could bring about the starvation of the Italian republics as much as that of the Near Eastern Islamic world. After Da Gama's voyage, for the first time, the weapon could be used without wounding the hand that held it, and this was apparently the paramount argument of D. Manuel.

Instructions for the capture in the Indian Ocean of any Muslim vessels carrying spices are already contained in the *regimento* given in 1500 to

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-90.

Pedro Álvares Cabral.¹⁰ Such a policy stance cannot have resulted, as is often assumed, from the belief that the old Red Sea route—with a slight adjustment—could become more economical and thus compete strongly with the Cape route. Once the blockade of the 'Straits of Mecca' had been ordered, it could scarcely be efficient, moreover, without patrolling the western Indian Ocean; thus, privateering appears as a kind of extension to the blockade, and its natural corollary, besides being a supplementary source of income for the king and his officers. Also, the latter were given a share in the mercantile ventures of the King, through the well-known system of *quintaladas*, *agasalhados* and *liberdades da Índia*, which is to say the free transportation of a certain amount of personal goods on the King's vessels. Thus, the presence of Portuguese fleets off the Asian shores gradually became lucrative for larger and larger circles of Portuguese citizens, a fact that must have contributed to the weakening of the opposition to D. Manuel's 'eastern policy' in Portugal.

So far as we are aware, D. Manuel did not cherish dreams of military conquest in Asia.¹¹ He did cherish the idea of becoming Emperor of the East, intending—in all probability—to assume that title after Jerusalem had fallen into his hands; and he tried to act as an emperor in the medieval sense of the word, even if he did not actually assume the title. This means that he felt entrusted with a universal mission, to foster equity, peace and the supremacy of the Christian faith. But such a global design left little room for effective rule: and in fact D. Manuel's instructions to his agents in India clearly show that he was concerned with *suzerainty* rather than sovereignty. As the kings of Leon and Castile had done since the eleventh century in the context of the so-called Muslim *taifas* in the Iberian peninsula, he tried to submit the Muslim Sultans of East Africa to the payment of *páreas*, a tribute which meant the acknowledgement of Christian supremacy.¹² With non-Muslim rulers on the other hand, he preferred to set up ties of real or fictive kinship: he became godfather to the King of Congo, treated the King of Cochin as his brother and dreamed of a marriage between the offspring of the royal houses of Portugal and Vijayanagara.

¹⁰ Cf. A Fontoura da Costa, ed., *Os sete unicos documentos de 1500, conservados em Lisboa, referentes à viagem de Pedro Álvares Cabral*, Lisbon, 1940.

¹¹ Thus, see the 'Regimento que levou D. Francisco de Almeida quando foi por capitam mor pera a Índia no ano de 1505 a 5 de Março', *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*, (henceforth *ANTT*), Maço II de Leis, no. 13; also 'Regimento para Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, capitão-mor dos navios da Índia', Almeirim, 13 February 1508, published in R.A. de Bulhão Pato, ed., *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, Vol. II, Lisbon, 1898, pp. 403–419.

¹² These questions have been dealt with at greater length in Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'L'idée imperiale manueline', in Jean Aubin, ed., *Les découverts portugaises et l'Europe*, Paris, Centre Culturel Portugais, forthcoming. But also see the earlier treatment in Thomaz, 'Estrutura política e administrativa do Estado da Índia no século XVI', in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro, ed., *Actas do II Seminário de História Indo-Portuguesa*, Lisbon 1985, pp. 511–540, and in P. António Domingues de Sousa Costa, 'A expansão portuguesa à luz do direito', *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra*, Vol. XX, 1962.

In fact, none of the conquests of the Portuguese in Asia during the first half of the sixteenth century is truly attributable to royal initiative: Goa, Hormuz and Melaka were conquered because of Afonso de Albuquerque's decision, and, as a consequence, the problem of the 'legitimacy' of the conquest of Goa could be raised in the royal council thirty-two years after the event, by the party that preferred expansion in North Africa to that in Asia.¹³ Albuquerque, whose patrons at the Portuguese court were D. Martinho de Castelo Branco, Duarte Galvão, and others of D. Manuel's inner circle, had been sent to the East apparently when the sovereign and his counsellors felt that the time was ripe to mount an assault on the Islamic bloc. Albuquerque shared with his medieval-minded patrons the Messianic belief in the imminent fall of the so-called 'Sultanate of Babylonia', which is to say Cairo, identified here with the symbolic Babylonia of St. John's Apocalypse. However, as for the Portuguese presence in Asia, he had his own, more pragmatic, ideas, the bulk of which were probably inspired by his contacts with his Italian, and perhaps more importantly Asian, advisers, who knew Asian realities far better than did the royal council at Lisbon.

Albuquerque appears to have rapidly grasped two important points. First, that to use India as a springboard against the Muslim Near East was not possible without a well-grounded position in India itself; second, that coastal and inter-regional trade would provide larger and safer profits than the Cape route, which was long and dangerous, and the profits of which depended on the goods returning from Asia, rather than what Europe could provide. It is precisely because of this that he went beyond the royal instructions, and so needed to justify his actions in Asia to the King at every turn; this is also why we possess such a splendid collection of his letters, which are both numerous and detailed.¹⁴ Albuquerque built for D. Manuel a true seaborne empire in Asia, and gave the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean a definitive shape that would last for over a century with minor modifications. His policies, as might have been expected, aroused strong opposition, and gave fuel to Albuquerque's detractors and to rival factions in the court. The financial needs of the state had increased, owing both to its geographical expansion and to the preparation of costly expeditions against the Near East. Royal monopolies were reinforced on the Cape route to meet these financial needs, and the 'India liberties' were restricted. State-run trade began to pervade intra-Asian routes in the period 1512 to 1515, and privateering was restrained in order to keep men and vessels ready for long-distance expeditions.¹⁵ Further, the traditional

¹³ Thus, see the two opinions given to D. João III in late 1542, when he wished to consider abandoning Asia, *Biblioteca da Ajuda*, Lisbon, Codex 51-V-32, fls. 174-204, transcribed in Otilia Rodrigues Fontoura, *Portugal em Marrocos*, cited in note 2 *supra*.

¹⁴ Cf. R.A. de Bulhão Pato and H. Lopes de Mendonça, ed., *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, 7 Volumes, Lisbon, 1884-1935.

¹⁵ On the system of intra-Asian Crown voyages, see Luís Filipe Thomaz, *De Malaca a Pegu: Viagens de um feitor português (1512-15)*, Lisbon, 1966.

Portuguese military system based on armed clientele, somewhat anarchically led by the nobility, showed itself to be unsuitable for Albuquerque's purposes—as he discovered in Hormuz in 1508. Hence, he endeavoured to create organised and professionally-led bodies of military, exactly as D. Manuel was trying, albeit unsuccessfully, to do in Portugal.¹⁶

This last measure exasperated the nobles, even as the state monopolies exasperated the merchants, and restrictions on privateering exasperated everybody. The freedom enjoyed by Albuquerque in implementing the king's instructions, as well as his aspirations for the title of Duke of Goa, allowed his foes at the court to spread doubts about his loyalty. Meanwhile in India, the 'mercantile party' did everything possible to boycott the royal factories, and thus to disorganise the state trading system, and to discourage the ambassador from Ethiopia (Mateus) in order to hinder the *entente* with Prester John and the assault on Egypt.¹⁷ In the Portuguese court, the pressure of the opposition, led by the Baron de Alvito, became too strong, and this time D. Manuel had to yield and dismiss Albuquerque, and thus give up his plans regarding Jerusalem and the Near East. A cousin of the Baron, Lopo Soares de Albergaria, was appointed in place of Albuquerque.

At this stage, although the possibility of giving up Goa had been envisaged, a total withdrawal from the Indian Ocean had not yet been seriously considered. Later on, in 1542, again in around 1570 and then once more in 1620, such plans came to be discussed; in the meantime, the colonisation of Brazil had conferred further economic viability on the project of a south Atlantic empire.

In sum, the governorship in Portuguese Asia of Lopo Soares (1515–18) represents a species of compromise between two policies; projects for intervention in the Near East are abandoned, the organisation of a standing army is also abandoned, the authority of the state loosens, and private trade is widely tolerated—but the Portuguese possessions in Asia are kept. This leads to a gradual reorientation, in a geographical sense, of the Portuguese presence in the East, which turns its back on the Islamic world, and begins to look more and more to Sri Lanka, the Bay of Bengal, Indonesia and the Far East, where peaceful commerce seemed easier.

But the sudden decompression of these years (beginning in around 1516) brought forth other consequences as well. The liberty 'to go anywhere

¹⁶ On this subject, see Jean Aubin, 'Le capitaine Leitão: Un sujet insatisfait de D. João III', *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra*, Vol. XXIX, 1983, pp. 87–152; also Geneviève Bouchon and Luís Filipe Thomaz, *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy: Relation Portugaise Anonyme (1521)*, Paris, 1988, pp. 48–49.

¹⁷ Cf. Maria Emília Madeira Santos, 'Afonso de Albuquerque e os feitores', in Albuquerque and Guerreiro, ed., *Actas do II Seminário*, pp. 201–226; Jean Aubin, 'L'ambassade du Prêtre Jean à D. Manuel', *Mare Luso-Indicum*, Vol. III, 1976, pp. 1–56.

for the sake of one's own profit' proclaimed by Lopo Soares,¹⁸ caused the shores of the Indian Ocean to be settled by small-scale Portuguese traders and privateers, and at the same time depopulated the Portuguese empire proper. Merchants free of any state control arose, particularly in the Bay of Bengal. The recrudescence of uncontrolled privateering and plunder served to discredit the Portuguese Crown with many Asian potentates, and also disturbed the precarious balance of power in many ports which were already under Portuguese control, such as Melaka.¹⁹ While in the West, the Ottomans took possession of Egypt, clearing a path for themselves into the Indian Ocean, and the Spaniards prepared to reach the Far East from the other side of the world, in the Indian Ocean, the main rivals of the Portuguese—namely the Gujaratis—decided to profit from the reigning anarchy by stirring up plots and mutinies against their competitors in several centres.²⁰ This situation provided D. Manuel with a good pretext to resume some personal authority, and even to renew contacts with Prester John—something which was done by Lopo Soares's cousin and successor as governor, Diogo Lopes de Sequeira (1518–21), who was apparently not so closely linked to the 'mercantile party' led by the Baron de Alvito. In the heyday of his crusading plans (which is to say in the period from about 1505 to 1513), the King had frequently appealed to the 'public opinion' of Christendom, promoting the publication of several opuscles in Latin, which served to display his power, the extent of his services to the *Res-pública Christiana*, and to underline the victories won by his captains against enemies of the Faith. Now he decided once again to appeal to the public opinion of his own realm, by encouraging the publication of a letter received from India, which recounted the contacts between Diogo Lopes and the Ethiopian authorities; this *Carta das Novas*, which was the first document on Portuguese expansion actually to be printed in the Portuguese language (in June 1521) announced that the fall of Mecca and Jerusalem was finally imminent.²¹ Its printing must be interpreted as a manoeuvre to neutralise the 'mercantile party' opposed to the conquest of Egypt.

A few months later, however, in December 1521, D. Manuel died, and the opposition which had in the meantime crystallised around the Crown

¹⁸ Cf. Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, ed. J. de Lima Felner, 4 Volumes, Lisbon, 1860–66, Vol. II, p. 466, also see the letter from Lopo Soares to the Captain of Melaka, December 1515, in *ANTT*, Cartas dos Vice-Reis, no. 132.

¹⁹ Cf. Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Nina Chatu e o comércio português em Malaca', *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, Vol. V, 1976, pp. 137–161.

²⁰ This is brought out in Geneviève Bouchon, 'Regent of the Sea': Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507–28, Delhi, 1988, pp. 163–164, passim, as also in Bouchon, 'Une thalassocratie oubliée: Le Gujarat à l'aube du XVI^e siècle', *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien*, Vol. VI, 1990, forthcoming.

²¹ Cf. Thomaz, 'L'idée impériale manueline', *op. cit.*; also Aubin, 'L'ambassade du Prêtre Jean', *op. cit.*

Prince again came to dominate. All the copies of the *Carta das Novas* save one, in London, disappeared and presumably were destroyed by order of the new king, or at the very least under the influence of the new ruling elite. From this point in time, the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* was considered a thing-in-itself, and no more as a springboard for the conquest of the Near East. Even so, since the main commercial rivals of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean still were, for the most part, the same as in Egypt and Morocco (to say nothing of the Peninsular *reconquista* of the Middle Ages)—that is the Arabs and the Muslims in general—the struggle for the spice trade could easily be cast in the terms of a crusade and hence produce a superficial impression of continuity with the preceding reign for the benefit of the masses, even if the regnant powers did not actively foster it. Besides, this view is firmly rooted in the chronicles written in the middle of the sixteenth century—like Barros, Correia or Castanheda—which, even today, constitute our principal source of information on the Portuguese in Asia. It is, however, necessary to recognise that such an apparent ideological continuity veils a series of political inflections which occurred in reality.

The royal commercial monopolies of the Portuguese Crown remained in existence throughout the sixteenth century, though their extent underwent changes, depending on the prevailing circumstances and policies. After 1533, they began to loosen, but it is significant that they never wholly disappeared.²² Thus, the Portuguese state remained a mercantilist one, which is to say a state that was also a commercial enterprise. This feature is quite pregnant with consequences: unlike modern liberal states (which were controlled by commercial and industrial bourgeoisies and conceived of colonisation essentially as the creation of the necessary infrastructure and the optimal conditions for private economic activity), the mercantilist state, as a trading enterprise, was the rival of its own subjects.

And so, a subterranean rivalry always existed within the *Estado da Índia* between the King's agents and private merchants. We must, however, keep in mind that private merchants and Crown officials were often the *same* persons. Sixteenth century Portugal had almost nothing to offer to an India that was at least as developed as Europe from the technological point of view, and better endowed by nature with vegetal species. As the commerce of the Roman Empire with India had done centuries before, Portugal's trade with the East necessarily implied a deficit for the former. Spices and other imports had to be paid for, mainly in cash or coinage metals, and the state—itself engaged in trade—chronically suffered from a shortage of means with which to pay soldiers, mariners and civil servants. Therefore, they were quite often paid in merchandise, which they then had to convert to cash in the market; also, frequently, the salary consisted

²² This question is discussed at some length in Luís Filipe Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'Archipel au XVI^e siècle', *Archipel*, 18, 1979, pp 105–125

of a certain sum of money plus some licenses to trade in order to supplement the former.²³ The King tried to confine the mercantile activities of his agents within the limits set by such licenses and repeatedly decreed measures forbidding them from engaging in private business beyond this; but these rules always remained dead letters, since chronic shortages of cash forced the public treasury to live constantly on loans, usually taken from the King's officials themselves. In such conditions, strict observance of the rules would have caused not only the officials but the state itself to starve. And so private interest and state interest, albeit often opposed in principle, came in practice to be inextricably entangled.

We must note, besides, that it was always easier to elude royal monopolies outside of the Portuguese state-controlled settlements. For this reason, especially during periods in which central power appeared feeble—as was the case during the governorship of Lopo Soares (1515–18)—large numbers of small traders left the Portuguese strongholds to settle outside the reach of the authorities. Regions east of Sri Lanka, where the state was barely present and Muslim trading groups were not particularly powerful, were normally preferred for this purpose; this is the origin of Portuguese merchant colonies at Nagapattinam, Pulicat and Mylapur, and later Macao, Makassar etc. It appears that, in general, Asian powers preferred these spontaneous colonies to Portuguese royal factories, since the latter meant—to a certain extent—the presence of a foreign state and seemed, therefore, to involve some risks; in contrast, the former appeared manageable and, hence, quite harmless.

Besides, private merchants could ensure virtually the same commercial relations as the royal factories did. They could also act as intermediaries between the official Portuguese network and local markets; but in order to perform that role, they needed to keep the royal enterprise away, and, thus, preserve their own freedom of operation. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that they frequently came to terms with local rulers in order to boycott the official Portuguese agents. The sabotage of several Portuguese embassies to Pegu, Bengal and so on, by the Portuguese resident in these very places, results from this logic.²⁴

The *Estado da Índia* tried at times to reincorporate these outsiders by force. We know, for instance, that in 1540 an expedition was sent by the viceroy D. Garcia de Noronha to the Portuguese settlement at Mylapur, bearing orders to raze it to the ground and to compel the inhabitants to 'come back to India' (*com poderes pera fazer d'ella vir pera India toda a*

²³ *Ibid*; also Jean Aubin, 'Un voyage d'Ormuz à Goa en 1520', *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, 3, 1988, pp. 417–432, and Geneviève Bouchon, *Navires et Cargaisons retour de l'Inde en 1518*, Paris, 1977.

²⁴ Geneviève Bouchon, 'Les premiers voyages portugais à Pasai et à Pegou (1512–1520)', *Archipel*, 18, 1979, pp. 127–158; Bouchon and Thomaz, *Voyage dans les Deltas*, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–102.

gente, e desfazer a povoação).²⁵ But in the end the authorities came to terms with the settlers; Mylapur was even recognised as a Portuguese municipality and became the seat of a bishopric in the early seventeenth century, as well as an important port of call in the official seafaring network, for which the local traders became *compradores*.²⁶

Besides the economic motive—to elude state monopolies—there was also a social reason for this kind of desertion from official service. Portuguese society in the sixteenth century was still in part a redistributive one: trade licenses as well as official positions and functions were granted as rewards for services rendered, in a rather feudal manner. Those who were dissatisfied with their lot, or who simply saw larger returns from trading on their own account, were easily tempted by the large number of ports in Asia where the Portuguese Crown was not present. The evolution of privateering too was rooted in similar causes. In the Atlantic, for the sake of peace and good relations with local powers, whose aid was needed to develop trade, plunder had been forbidden as early as 1448; but in the Indian Ocean, it was virtually impossible to follow this pattern, since privateering was a natural adjunct to the blockade of the straits of Bab-el-mandeb, where it was intended for both political and economic purposes. Besides, the presence in Asia of members of the Portuguese military class, the lower nobility, was indispensable, owing to the continual hostility with the Muslims and other commercial rivals; but this class, whose education revolved around warfare, seldom possessed the necessary capital or acumen to engage whole-heartedly in trade. Moreover, the royal monopolies, which confined the Portuguese to local commerce and coastal trade, hindered the growth of a private sector and the development of a true bourgeoisie. Privateering, which was often tacitly blessed by the ruling authorities, remained an easy way out for many noblemen.²⁷

But this source of income too had two kinds of limits: first, in accordance with a principle of Islamic law which had been adopted in the Iberian peninsula during the *reconquista*, one-fifth of the value of the prizes belonged to the sovereign; second, only vessels which did not carry a Portuguese *cartaz* could be captured.²⁸ Those who felt these limits were too stifling very often went a step further and became pirates. We may legitimately

²⁵ Correia, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 112

²⁶ Cedula Consistorialis of 9-1-1606, in Parva Manso, ed., *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum in Ecclesiis Africae Asiae atque Oceaniae*, Vol. II, Lisbon, 1870, pp. 4-6; also see, for a general discussion of Mylapur, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Profit at the Apostle's Feet: The Portuguese in 16th Century São Tomé de Mylapur', in Aubin, ed., *Les Découverts Portugaises et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Cf. Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, 'Exiles and Renegades in early sixteenth century Portuguese India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 23, 3, 1986, pp. 249-262; also Bouchon and Thomaz, *Voyages dans les Deltas*, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-413.

²⁸ On the *cartaz*, which is derived from the Arabic *qirtās*, see Correia, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 298.

surmise that the use and abuse of privateering, as well as piracy, hindered, in turn, the development of peaceful trade and perpetuated—by a sort of historical feedback—the warlike atmosphere of the early years of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. Later, in around 1570, when the Crown turned its attention mainly to the Atlantic, the Portuguese settlers in Asia were numerous enough and private interests sufficiently rooted to render the abandoning of the *Estado da Índia* infeasible. The Crown decided, therefore, to rent out the Cape route, and to grant intra-Asian voyages to noblemen whose services had to be rewarded. And so, paradoxically, the redistributive system revived when it might have been expected to fade away.²⁹

In conclusion then, the solutions adopted by the Portuguese in Asia were the fruit of a succession of compromises rather than the concretisation of a system conceived beforehand; but the elements were far too complex to be easily apparent to contemporary observers. Attempts to reform the system, such as Diogo do Couto's *Soldado Prático*, reveal a clear incapacity to look for new solutions; instead, they hark back to the governorship of Afonso de Albuquerque as a sort of Eden, and the proposed ideal is to go back to it.³⁰

The real social history of Portuguese expansion in the East is yet to be written and, in fact, the elements that are available to us at the moment, prevent us from advancing very far. Concerning the upper classes who directed the Portuguese Asian enterprise in its early years, a remarkable feature is their clannish structure: this class is made up of a limited number of families, frequently allied by marriage. Often, entire generations left for India, leaving behind in Portugal only the oldest son, who inherited the position of his father. Also, the class which directed the expansion in Asia usually had no more than a limited opportunity to turn itself into a landed aristocracy, and instead remained a sort of *noblesse de service*, always dependent on the King for the periodic redistribution of favours and posts.³¹ Equally, one can say of the privateers and freelancers who belonged to this social class that they were usually marginal in relation to the tightly-knit structure of clan solidarity within the ruling elite of Portuguese Asia, and, hence, had fewer chances of gaining access to official positions. But, at the same time, one should not forget the role of individual characters and specific circumstances, or neglect subconscious and irrational factors which were frequently of significance. After all, in the final analysis, history is made by men.

²⁹ For the structure of official commerce in this period, see F. P. Mendes da Luz, ed., 'Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas partes da Índia', *Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra*, Vol. XXI, 1953.

³⁰ Cf. Diogo do Couto, *Diálogo do Soldado Prático*, ed., Manuel Rodrigues Lapa, Lisbon, 1954.

³¹ Bouchon and Thomaz, *Voyage dans les Deltas*, op. cit., pp. 409–413; also see the suggestive remarks in Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Ensaio*, Vol. II, (sobre história de Portugal), Lisbon, 1968.

CONTENTS

- D. RAJASEKHAR/ Famines and Peasant Mobility: Changing
Agrarian Structure in Kurnool District of Andhra, 1870-1900
- VERONIQUE BOUILLIER/ Growth and Decay of a Kanphata Yogi
Monastery in South West Nepal
- RAVI VASUDEVAN/ The Cultural Space of a Film Narrative: Interpreting
Kismet (Bombay Talkies, 1943)
- SAMITA GUPTA/ 'Sris Chandra Chatterji: The Quest for a
National Architecture'
-

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Book Reviews

AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI, *The Presidency Banks and the Indian Economy: 1876-1914*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1989, xv + 294 pp., Rs. 125.

The first two volumes of this projected multi-volumed history of the State Bank of India were warmly received by reviewers although some moaned about the excessive length off-stage. Conscious of that criticism perhaps, Professor Bagchi has made the present third volume much shorter and has, as claimed by him, highlighted only 'certain major features of the evolution' without 'going into the regional and organisational details in all their complexity'. If we do not take into account the first two chapters of the present volume that provide the backdrop, there are only 160 odd pages devoted to the history of the Bank as such. While this drastic abridgement has certain advantages, one cannot but regret the decision not to go into the details of the evolution of the three Presidency Banks.

The book covers about four decades from 1876 when the three Presidency Banks were brought within the purview of the Presidency Banks Act. This represents an extremely important period for all present-day developed countries. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, with the exception of Britain (which is in any case the pioneer), all the developed countries of today had achieved their first big push in economic development during the four or five decades prior to the First World War. Equally, it would be appropriate to search for clues to our own underdevelopment during this period.

The opening chapter is an attempt to describe the Indian economy as it evolved during the four decades before 1914. The by no means obvious connection of this chapter to the rest of the book is to be inferred from Bagchi's question:

Let us ask in what ways the fact that India was a dependent colony of Britain influenced the behaviour of traders, and investors who formed the major clientele of the Presidency Banks.

The answer is given only in an indirect manner. Bagchi, however, gives a convincing picture of the Indian economy that had a great potential for development, yet was held back because of the omissions and commissions

of a despotic colonial government. Even the much acclaimed irrigation development is dismissed as having little positive effect on the Indian economy. A variety of controversial topics of nineteenth century economic history are touched upon and an opinion given without any elaboration—no doubt because of the self-imposed space constraint. But there are brief discussions on the unreliability of Atkinson's 1902 estimates of national income of India, on the usability of official data for analysing Indian economic history, on the history of tariffs relating to imports of cotton yarn, on the nature of the growth of plantation industries in India, and much more.

Bagchi attempts a succinct account of the monetary history of India during this period in the second chapter. The decades between 1876 and 1914 happen to be the so-called Golden Age of the International Gold Standard, and yet, thanks to Indian economic policy being increasingly dominated and dictated by the London 'City' via the India Office in order to safeguard the British imperial interests, India did not benefit from the nascent Indian industrialism as much as she could have. Currency policy in India is one area where the true characteristics of British colonial rule come out with lucid clarity. When purely Indian interests were sacrificed either in the interests of Britain or in the name of received economic theory, even British civil servants in India were constrained to protest. But as Bagchi points out: 'British Indian officials were unable to do anything in the matter even where they minded to do so without the explicit permission of Whitehall.'

From the early 1870s to the early 1890s, the single major issue was the policy which the Government of India should adopt due to the continuous fall in the value of silver. After much discussion and initial inaction, despite the difficulties faced by the Government of India due to the horrendous increases in the 'Home Charges', India was slowly eased into what has come to be known as the Gold Exchange Standard. Though this story has been told often, Bagchi's restatement throws a lot of fresh light, and he has forcefully demonstrated how Indian policy was consistently fashioned without any consideration for the welfare of the people or taking into account the structural problems that prevented India from benefiting from international developments.

The core of the book is the third chapter in which the author takes up the question of the long-term behaviour of the lending rates of the Presidency Banks as well as the state of the money market, the central theme being the intricate interrelationship of the three Presidency Banks, the Government and the big exchange banks. The point at issue is that the Government was extremely unwilling, for a variety of reasons, to give a free hand to the Presidency Banks. The Banks could not even borrow money in England against good securities, and indeed, were prevented from conducting normal foreign exchange operations. Of course, as custodians of government

balances, they were in a privileged position. The policies of the Presidency Banks regarding the assets to hold and the tactics to be adopted against their competitors were all very much influenced by the Government policies regarding the raising of loans and the transfer of funds to Britain. In fact, during the quarter century till 1900, the relationship between the Government of India and the Presidency Banks was marked, as Bagchi correctly says, by 'friction and recrimination'.

Bagchi has assembled important data relating to deposits in the Banks, and loans and discounts to business. Despite their seasonality, both of them had grown significantly during this period. In all, the role of public deposits on the whole declined over the period, and that had much to do with the policy of the government. What is of interest is that commercial banks outperformed the Presidency Banks in this period, although in the previous two decades the growth was not as significant as it had been earlier. The most important feature of the period, from the banking point of view, was the phenomenon of more than normal seasonal fluctuations in the demand for credit and the consequences to the prime lending rates of the Presidency Banks.

Bagchi devotes a third of this chapter to the oft-mentioned scheme of a central bank of India. Already the nearest to such an institution were the three Presidency Banks and, hence, it was not surprising if many felt that these three Banks should be merged to form the much desired Central Bank. The author skilfully analyses the various proposals made, the operation of special interests and the reasons behind the failure to establish such an institution. The list of reasons given in favour of such an outcome is rather incomplete, and one is surprised that the author, as far as I could see, has not gone into the real reasons why the Government of India also was not enthusiastic about the Central Bank. Had the author probed a little more, he would have received added support to his hypothesis (in his words) of 'multiple systems of discrimination and differentiation' practised by the British government in India.

Basically it was a question (except in special cases) of the broadly non-interventionist policy that the Government was following. As Sir James Brunyate, the Finance Secretary, wrote,

In fact, while our hands are free, as under existing banking arrangements, we find little real difficulty in defining the proper limits of intervention, and keeping within them. With a State Bank, we should probably *have* to do a good deal more. But will it be right to put ourselves in a position which leads us further.

During the crisis of 1913, the Government had agreed to lend Rs.10 million on a one per cent basis to the Bank of Bengal and offered a substantial sum

to the Bank of Bombay. The Bank of Bengal itself gave 'extremely liberal assistance' to one European managed bank in trouble and was willing to give similar help to the remaining European banks should such eventualities arise. But a state-owned Central Bank could hardly be so brazenly selective. To continue citing Brunyate:

To take a definite example, the Bank of Bengal has authorised one of the European Banks to announce publicly that it has the Bank of Bengal at its back. Such an announcement binds the Bank of Bengal no further than as regards that particular bank. A State Bank could hardly do less in like circumstances. But such an announcement from a State Bank, with such a strong Government connection as would be inevitable in India, would make it exceedingly difficult to refuse a similar guarantee in other cases. (Confidential DO to F.M. Newmarch, 13 November 1913, No. 1191. L/F/7/221, India Office Records)

The last two chapters deal with profitability and personnel problems, respectively. Utilising the half-yearly and annual reports of the Banks, Bagchi builds a clear picture of how profitable their operations were. The Bank of Bengal had obviously done quite well during this period—its net profits doubled and dividends declared also showed a sharp rise—and so did the other two Presidency Banks. However, the fact remains that the Presidency Banks operated only in the fringes of the Indian economy and, as correctly stated by the author, 'did not make any dent on the situation of the debt-ridden and credit starved peasantry'. Even in the urban money market, Presidency Banks were, by no means, major players. The Banks indeed, seemed to have wanted only this state of affairs during this period. Otherwise they would not have downgraded the only important connecting link with the Indian customers, and especially those who utilised the *Hundi* system, namely, the *Khazanchee*. During this period the Indian *Khazanchee* was reduced in status and relieved of many responsibilities.

Banking history in India is still not a developed *genre*. Professor Bagchi has taken us very far from the early works of Cooke, Symes-Scutt, Brunyate and others. It is hoped that the State Bank of India's historical cell, which has collected mountains of material, will allow and stimulate fuller research by other scholars into more detailed aspects of the problems that are here, inevitably, touched upon but lightly.

S. Ambirajan
Indian Institute of Technology
Madras

FRANCINE FRANKEL and M.S.A. RAO, eds., *Dominance and State Power in Modern India, Volume 1*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989, xv + 443 pp., Rs. 190.

This major work has been some years in the making and has been eagerly awaited. The two volumes will be widely consulted by students in all the social disciplines, since they represent the most comprehensive available guide to the political sociology of contemporary India. In common with all edited volumes, the individual chapters are of variable quality; but this time, unusual editorial efforts have been made to ensure that at least the chapters address common themes. Thus, the chapters revolve around issues of domination and subordination expressed in structures of caste, class and land control. They are eclectic in their theoretical basis: Frankel explicitly eschews Marxist or modernisation models in her introduction.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the work is its complexity of analysis relative to the works of political scientists a couple of decades ago. Concepts once thought to be contradictory in the Indian scene—notably, caste and class—are now seen to be capable of coexisting indefinitely. This view is quite standard by now but its emphasis in a major collection of the present kind will be a valuable educational aid.

If one looks to this volume for guidance as to the direction of change and development in India, there is bound to be disappointment. Overall trends scarcely emerge from the welter of social tendencies. This is not so much a limitation of these particular authors as a pervasive scholarly agnosticism as to what the 'underlying' trends are. Is India heading rapidly towards a more equal order? Is 'dominance' becoming less pronounced? There is consensus that India is less disfigured by the grosser forms of domination and inequality than it was in pre-independence times. But in the context of landlessness, the persistence of structurally depressed conditions among communities like the untouchables, endemic caste conflict in many areas, and the fresher inequalities of capitalism, the various essays remain uncommitted to a vision of positive change or, indeed, any particular style of change.

The book is divided into five chapters on different regions—Bihar, U.P., Tamil Nadu, Andhra, and Karnataka—with a chapter comparing agrarian movements in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and a chapter on concepts by the late M.S.A. Rao. In some ways the strongest essays are those by Frankel herself, James Manor and David Washbrook. Frankel performs a valuable service in sorting out the political chronology of post-independence Bihar and providing credible explanations for the twists and turns. In view of how little has been written about this important and immensely complicated State, this is particularly useful. At the same

time, the chapter is short on the social detail which lies behind major institutional developments: the peculiar and fascinating quality of Bihari life fails to emerge. The essay displays little evidence of sustained field work, something that is particularly evident in the treatment of contemporary revolutionary politics.

Manor's chapter on Karnataka displays the surest touch among the regional contributions. Manor has thought through the evolution of one of the more peaceful and least complicated regions, and persuasively makes the links between society and politics. Washbrook's much longer chapter on Tamil Nadu is quite different in design. He makes a number of perceptive observations on long-run trends in Tamil Nadu—the anti-Brahmin movement, Dravidianism, the DMK and its offshoots. More than some of the other chapters, Washbrook focuses on the extent to which the numerous untouchables of Tamil Nadu have been dealt out of the advantages flowing from the destruction of old patterns of dominance. This chapter is useful as a sweeping piece of interpretative, long-run social history.

Zoya Hasan's chapter on Uttar Pradesh is well informed but, for the most part, covers ground that is well known. G. Ram Reddy's discussion of Andhra is less predictable about an area that is much less chronicled. While there is some interesting material, one emerges with no strong understanding of the social basis of political movements in this region—the Telengana unrest, the NTR phenomenon, and so on. K.C. Alexander's brief was to look at some of the most subordinated segments of Indian society by comparing the agrarian movements of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Several new insights emerge but, overall, the territory is familiar. Finally, M.S.A. Rao's opening chapter is a useful account of some of the conceptual pitfalls of doing the political sociology of India.

In sum, this is a solid work with patches of significant illumination. It is also a model of cooperation between Indian and foreign scholars of India.

Oliver Mendelshon
La Trobe University
Melbourne

RANAJIT GUHA, ed., *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society: Volume V*, 1987, x + 296 pp., Rs. 150; *Volume VI*, 1989, x+335 pp., Rs. 200. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Through its first four volumes, the Subaltern Studies project was pre-occupied with two overlapping tasks: (a) a polemic against the Congress dominated saga of Indian nationalism; (b) the interpretive understanding

of the culture and politics of the subaltern classes (chiefly peasants and workers). This research agenda resulted in a set of outstanding essays on the lived experience of subaltern groups in different parts of India. Studies like those by Shahid Amin on the reception of Gandhi by the peasantry (Volume III), and David Hardiman on the politics of drink in tribal areas of Gujarat (Volume IV), rank with the finest examples of social history produced anywhere in the world.

If these two most recent volumes are anything to go by, the Subaltern Studies project can no longer be defined by a research agenda to which all its practitioners subscribe. In terms of length, quality, and intellectual provenance, the essays in these volumes are extraordinarily diverse. However, the majority come into one of three categories:

By far the most challenging essays are those which look closely at elite-subaltern relationships. David Hardiman (Volume V) provides a rich narrative on the evolution and functioning of *Bhil-Shahukar* relations in Eastern Gujarat. In his analysis of the idiom of tribal resistance to moneylenders, Hardiman demonstrates that despite the 'respect that the Bhil had for the power of the *Shahukar*, they did not accept their moral hegemony'. In an essay in the same volume, David Arnold interprets government action during the plague of the late nineteenth century as an attempt by the colonial state to control the bodies of its subject population. Science and law worked in tandem, as the state, in its bid to contain the epidemic, moved aggressively into domains hitherto under the control of local communities. Primarily relying on newspaper reports, Arnold also documents the varied forms of resistance to the 'colonial assault on the body'. In another fine essay, Sumit Sarkar (Volume VI), uses a village scandal to explore caste tensions in early twentieth century Bengal. The scandal involved the destruction of upper caste property and the violation of their women by a low caste (*Chandal*) disciple of a poor Brahmin sadhu. Noting that the *Chandal's* actions were an 'inverted appropriation of the motifs and values of Brahmanical culture', Sarkar goes on to make a more general argument about the village gentry's fears of being permeated by the culture of indigent Brahmins and/or low castes.

A set of less convincing essays examines the production of specific texts in colonial India. Shahid Amin (Volume V) studies the testimony of the approver in the trial of those accused of the attack on the Chauri Chaura police station in February 1922. Amin describes the process by which the approver was chosen and his testimony constructed in 'a historical, systematic and accusatory mode'. While charges of premeditation and conspiracy were central to the approver's testimony, Amin notes that both the judiciary and the Congress were reluctant to concede any *political* significance to the burning of the police station. Taking as his text the bland description of an abortion that resulted in the death of the pregnant woman and the foetus,

Ranajit Guha (Volume V) argues that the text underscores the strongly patriarchal values of mid-nineteenth century Bengal; values challenged, though not always successfully, by the solidarity of women. Gautam Bhadra (Volume VI) tries to discover the elements of a subaltern mentality in a long poem on *rajdharm* composed in the nineteenth century. His pre-occupations are similar to Sarkar's—viz., the interpenetration of elite and popular culture in rural Bengal—but he is markedly less successful in locating his text in history. Whereas Amin, Guha and Bhadra take up single texts, Gyanendra Pandey (Volume VI) studies a set of several colonial constructions of communalism. Here, communal conflict was invariably ascribed to a 'chaotic and unruly' precolonial past; a 'tradition' of strife which became the justification for British rule. Pandey argues that in the official narratives of the communal riot, the subject population's proclivity to 'rioting', 'bigotry', and 'criminality', are always distinguished from the 'rational', 'controlled', and 'legitimate' violence of the colonial state.

A third set of essays fail to situate their texts in context, and are thus of little interest to historians. These include G.C. Spivak's analysis of a Mahasweta Devi short story (Volume V), and Julie Stephens' criticisms of the writings of Indian feminists (Volume VI).

Two essays explicitly addressed to historians, but which defy classification, appear in Volume VI. Partha Chatterjee's contribution on caste and subaltern consciousness begins with a long but not terribly original critique of Louis Dumont. However, Chatterjee goes on to provide a lively and informative analysis of sectarian heresies among lower castes in early modern Bengal and their containment within the dominant ideology. Chatterjee's essay illustrates the dilemma facing Subaltern Studies as it approaches middle age; while its members are gifted practitioners of social history, their theoretical ambitions can apparently only be satisfied through the ponderous analysis of texts, or by dressing up commonsensical arguments in philosophical jargon.

We come, finally, to Ranajit Guha's essay in Volume VI, which is the most lengthy, and most bizarre, piece to appear in Subaltern Studies. At one level, Guha's essay is a long but rather pointless tirade against 'liberal historiography'; an opponent that is for the most part unidentified, and then equated with the 'Cambridge school'. At another level, the essay offers an orthodox Marxist periodisation of Indian history. Guha adheres to a mechanical slavery–feudalism–capitalism–(socialism) model of social evolution, in which precolonial India (from Kashmir to Kanyakumari?) can only be described as 'feudal' or 'semi-feudal'.

Early in this essay, Guha quotes Montesquieu in the French without providing an English translation. Evidently this was not an oversight. As Subaltern Studies moves further away from social history, its disciplinary affinities lie

with literary theory, its cultural affinities with France. Some of the key words in this emerging discourse are collude(s), index(ical), interrogate(s) and intertextual(ity); some of the key authors, Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, and Lacan. When Paris sneezes, Calcutta catches cold.

Ramachandra Guha
Institute of Economic Growth
Delhi

THE CALCUTTA HISTORICAL JOURNAL

The **Calcutta Historical Journal** is a bi-annual journal of the Department of History, University of Calcutta, now running its fourteenth year of publication. Though mainly concentrating on modern Indian history, the journal also publishes historical articles on other countries or periods. The list of contents of the last issue (a joint number) is given below.

Volume XIV: Nos 1-2: July 1989-June 1990

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| FRANK PERLIN | Financial Institutions and business practices across the Euro-Asian Interface: Comparative and Structural considerations, 1500-1900 |
| LAKSHMI SUBRAMANIAN | State Financing in Western India in the late 18th and early 19th centuries |
| K.N. CHAUDHURI | |
| interviewed by | |
| RANABIR CHAKRAVARTI | Indian History and the Indian Ocean |
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Famines and Peasant Mobility: Changing Agrarian Structure in Kurnool District of Andhra, 1870–1900

D.Rajasekhar

RBI Endowment Unit
Institute for Social and Economic Change,
Bangalore

Introduction

Mortality crises such as famines and epidemics were a regular feature of nineteenth century Kurnool. Periodically they ravaged the population, leaving marks on its size and composition and also the agrarian structure. This district witnessed widespread famines in the years 1876–78, 1891–92, 1896–97 and 1900. The famine of 1876–78 devastated several parts of the Madras Presidency; the cultivated area declined by 22 per cent, 3.5 to 4 million people had perished and in as many as 1,136 villages, more than 40 per cent of the population was missing.¹ The impact of these famines on the peasantry in Kurnool district was not only severe but also varied in its intensity across various strata of the peasantry.²

This paper, while analysing the changes in population and agrarian economy of the district during the period 1870–1900, brings out the impact of these famines on peasant mobility. It emphasises that the interaction of demographic and socioeconomic factors played a crucial role in bringing about long-term structural changes in a backward and stratified agrarian economy. This has been shown to take place in a manner that calls into

¹ *Report of the Famine Commission*, Vol. 4, 1881, hereafter *Report of the Famine Commission*, p. 359.

² At a macro level, Dharma Kumar argued that the agricultural labourers, tenants, small cultivators and weavers had suffered the most during the period of famine. Dharma Kumar, ed., *The Cambridge Economic History of India, c.1757–c.1970*, Vol. 2, New Delhi, 1984, p. 231.

Author's note: The paper benefited a great deal from the criticisms and suggestions of Dharma Kumar, Sakthi Padhi, Sumit Guha, G.N.Rao, Gita Sen, Chandan Mukherjee, Chiranjib Sen, T.K.Sundari and Mari Bhat. Namerta, Keshabhananda Das and G.Surekha were generous with their kind help. My sincere thanks to all of them.

question the orthodox Marxist as well as Chayanovian approaches which emphasise, in a deterministic fashion, one or the other set of factors.

The paper is presented in five sections. The first section discusses the analytical relationship between famines and peasant mobility. The second section provides a background to the agrarian economy of the district. The subsequent two sections analyse the impact of the 1876-78 famine on the population and agrarian economy of the district, respectively. The final section brings out the impact of famines on peasant mobility in the district.

Linkages between Famines and Peasant Mobility

Shanin's model on peasant mobility views famines as random factors. But 'the proximate cause of a famine might lie in some apparently unpredictable "natural disaster"... but these are no more than precipitating factors, intensifying or bringing to the fore a society's inner contradictions and inherent weaknesses, exposing an already extant vulnerability to food shortage and famine'.³ Some societies can pass through a prolonged drought without undergoing much suffering or loss of life, while others, subjected to a similar catastrophe, might experience mass starvation and high mortality. Thus, although a famine has meaning and context as an 'event' in itself (to the extent that it can be distinguished from what precedes and what follows it), it is seldom an entirely isolated episode or a purely chance misfortune and, hence, it is both an event and structure.⁴ The famines are, therefore, not completely random and unpredictable occurrences and cannot be meaningfully studied in isolation from the socioeconomic structure of a specific society.

Although Shanin hypothesises that random factors (which include state policies, fluctuations in weather and market) would lead to multi-directional mobility,⁵ he does not provide us with any analytical relationship between random factors and peasant mobility.⁶

An understanding of the impact of famines on economic mobility requires an understanding of what causes a famine. Malthus treated famine as the last resort of nature in ensuring balance between population and resources.⁷

³ David Arnold, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change*, Oxford and New York, 1988, hereafter Arnold, *Famine*, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-11.

⁵ Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class. Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society, Russia, 1910-29*, Oxford, 1972, p. 115

⁶ T Cox, 'Awkward Class or Awkward Classes? Class Relations in the Russian Countryside Before Collectivization', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 7, 1, 1975, p. 76

⁷ T.R. Malthus, *First Essay on Population*, New York, 1965. Though Malthus later on switched from pessimism to preventive checks such as delayed marriages and so on, his theory is popular in explaining both the slow growth of population in the past [Emanuel Le Ray Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, Urbana, 1974] and the rapid population growth in recent times after the subsistence crisis is overcome [K.F. Helleing, 'The Vital Revolution Reconsidered' in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversely, ed., *Population in History. Essays in Historical Demography*, London, 1974, pp. 79-86].

Following the Malthusian logic, many scholars attributed famines to the decline in food availability. It is somewhat difficult to accept this approach in the light of recent theoretical and empirical works. First, Boserup argues that population pressure, rather than being a cause of demographic catastrophe, has been the driving force behind agricultural innovation and the greatest incentive for increased agrarian production.⁸ Also, Malthus failed to foresee the potential growth of modern agriculture and industry. Second, as A.K. Sen argued, the food availability decline approach fails to take note of the distributional aspects or 'failure in peoples' entitlement to the food'.⁹ Notwithstanding the sceptical remarks on the novelty and wider application of Sen's argument¹⁰ and also the examples of famine in which food availability did decline¹¹, his approach is extremely useful in understanding why some people would starve and perish in a region during a famine period, while others, in the same region, would live in comfort.

Let us see how a failure of employment entitlement would result in starvation of some families in an economy, where market relations are just penetrating. Here, some families produce mainly food, while others acquire food mainly in exchange for either labour (agricultural labourers), or products of labour (artisans), or services (barbers, washermen, etc.). In the case of food producers, the access to food is a function of their production capabilities; which, in turn, are determined by their command over productive assets. Depending on the nature of productive assets, their food surplus would vary across the good and bad years; hence, their susceptibility to a famine. For the non-food producers, access to food is related to 'employment entitlements'; it is the level of demand by the food producers for their labour or products of labour, or services which determine their vulnerability to starvation in any particular situation.¹² Thus, a crop failure, by reducing employment opportunities for the non-food producers, might result in their starvation and deaths, especially when insurance mechanisms are not available and state help is meagre.

Such an increase in death rates would obviously be overwhelming among the poor, which, again, need not be same across age groups and sexes. The younger and middle-aged men are likely to do hard work either in relief camps or as agricultural labourers. Such hard work coupled with their physical deterioration during the famine period would make them much more vulnerable towards the epidemic diseases and lead to higher mortality

⁸ Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*, London, 1965.

⁹ A.K. Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Delhi, 1984.

¹⁰ Ashok Mitra, 'The Meaning of Meaning', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17, 27, 1984 and T.N. Srinivasan, a review article in *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, February 1983.

¹¹ B. Ashton *et al.*, 'Famine in China, 1958-61', *Population and Development Review*, 10, 4, 1984, hereafter Ashton *et al.*, *Famine in China*.

¹² Based on Meghnad Desai, 'The Economics of Famine' in C.A. Harrison, ed., *Famine*, Oxford, 1988 and A.K. Ghose, 'Food Supply and Starvation': A Study of Famines with reference to the Indian Sub-continent', *Oxford Economic Papers (New Series)* 34, 2, 1982.

rates among them. On the other hand, the survival chances of adult women, left behind in the villages to look after the children and old, would improve as the incidence of famine-induced diseases would be less here. The deserted women would also be helped by friends, relatives and others.¹³ However, the women in the relief camps are not likely to suffer from exhaustion as gratuitous relief is generally liberally provided to them.¹⁴ Added to that, females have a better (hormonally determined) immune resistance.¹⁵ Given the fact that higher mortality rates are mainly due to the spread of famine-induced diseases, such resistance may help the women to fight the infectious diseases better than men. Hence, women are likely to experience lower mortality rates than their male counterparts.

Females, however, are said to be the victims of social discrimination. Greenough argues that under the influence of patriarchal values of the Indian Hindu society, priority is given to the feeding of the adult males and male children so as to ensure the continuance of the male line.¹⁶ Moreover, women in the reproductive age groups are likely to be more susceptible to famine despite the fact that they are biologically stronger than men.

Let us have a look at the evidence on sex-wise mortality rates. In the famine of 1876-78, the women appeared to have died in less numbers as compared to the men in Madras¹⁷ and Bombay Presidencies.¹⁸ Even during the Bengal famine of 1943-44, Greenough admits that 'females experienced smaller increases in mortality... than males' in all the age groups.¹⁹ In Bangladesh, where females normally have the disadvantage of higher mortality rates than men, famine reduced or even reversed such a disadvantage.²⁰ Hence, 'women were not as generally abandoned as Greenough's

¹³ In Malawi the deserted women received much support and help from other members of their families in the initial stages of the famine of 1949. Megan Vaughan, *The Story of an African Famine: Gender and Famine in Twentieth Century Malawi*, Cambridge, 1987, hereafter Vaughan, *African Famine*, pp. 119-147.

¹⁴ For instance, in the Bengal famine of 1943, women constituted nearly 60 per cent of those who received free relief. P G Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery of Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943-1944*, New York, 1982, hereafter Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery of Bengal*, p. 190.

¹⁵ Ingrid Waldron, 'Sex Differences in Human Mortality: The Role of Genetic Factors', *Social Science & Medicine*, 17, 6, 1983, hereafter Waldron, *Sex Differences in Human Mortality*, pp. 324-325.

¹⁶ Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery of Bengal*, op. cit., pp. 215-217.

¹⁷ Roland Lardinois, 'Famine, Epidemics and Mortality in South India: A Reappraisal of the Demographic Crisis of 1876-78', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20, 11, 1985, hereafter Lardinois, *Famines, Epidemics and Mortality*, p. 460.

¹⁸ Machille Burge MacAlpin, *Subject to Famine. Food Crisis and Economic Change in Western India, 1860-1920*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1983, hereafter MacAlpin, *Subject to Famine*, pp. 63-67.

¹⁹ Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery of Bengal*, op. cit., p. 313.

²⁰ Susan Cotts Watkins and Jane Menken, 'Famines in History', *Population and Development Review*, 11, 4, 1985, hereafter Watkins et al. *Famines in History*, p. 656.

cultural hypothesis suggests'.²¹ Thus, 'females have greater biological capacity to resist the rigors of periods of famine—a capacity that is not offset by social factors'.²²

The death rates among the children would be the highest²³ because of their low body weights and greater vulnerability. Among them, the children at the weaning stage (1-3 years) are likely to suffer more from food shortage compared to infants²⁴, who may not be affected by sudden change in food availability or by varying cultural practices as the latter take most of their nourishment from breast milk. With respect to sex, male children would experience higher mortality rates than the female children.²⁵ The older people would have higher mortality rates²⁶ not only because of lower resistance towards nutritional stress but also due to the discrimination in the provision of food as they are less valued in the family.²⁷

Thus, the increase in mortality rates in poor families would be uneven across the age and sex groups. The mortality rates would be higher among male children and the older men, as compared to the adult males and females of all age groups. This results in changes in age and sex composition in the population. Immediately after a famine, the dependency ratio (DR) (the number of females, children and aged as a proportion to adult males) would decline as the mortality rates of children and aged would be high during the famine period. However, after a decade or so, the DR would increase because the children reaching adulthood would be less than adults who become old. In post-famine societies, the birth rates would normally be very high. As a result, the DR would go up further. Such an increase in

²¹ Arnold, *Famine*, *op. cit.*, p. 90

²² MacAlpin, *Subject to Famine*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²³ The child mortality rates in many of the famines were higher than other age groups. In South India, as a result of the 1876–78 famine, the greater deficits in the census of 1881 occurred in numbers of children under 10 years (Lardinois, *Famines, Epidemics and Mortality*, *op. cit.*). The most reliable data on age-specific death rates during famine come from the records of the Demographic Surveillance System in Matlab *thana*, Bangladesh. As compared to the averages for the five years prior to the independence in 1971, the greatest increases during the famine occurred among the children aged 1–11 months followed by children in the age-groups of 5–9 years (Chen *et al.*, *The Dynamics of Contemporary Famine*, Vol. I, Liege, International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, 1977, hereafter Chen *et al.*, *Dynamics of Contemporary Famine*, p. 416)

²⁴ Vaughan, *African Famine*, *op. cit.*, p. 36

²⁵ Waldron, *Sex Differences in Human Mortality*, *op. cit.*, p. 324

²⁶ In Bangladesh famine, the death rates among the people above 45 were one of the highest and only next to those among the children (Chen *et al.*, *Dynamics of Contemporary Famine*, *op. cit.*, p. 416).

²⁷ Ashton *et al.*, attribute the higher mortality rates among the old people to the food allocation system which was less favourable to the less privileged group of above 40. Ashton *et al.*, *Famine in China*, *op. cit.*, pp. 617–618

DR, we hypothesise, would be extremely marked among the poor families as they are the chief victims of famine.

The poor would also face a disruption in their family life. The abandonment of spouses is somewhat frequent during the period of famine. In Bengal, an abnormal proportion of the female destitutes in Calcutta was found to be widows and those deserted by their husbands during the famine period.²⁸ In Malawi, the famine year (1949) is 'remembered as the year of "many divorces"'.²⁹ Besides, a large number of men would out-migrate in search of work and food.³⁰ Very few of the out-migrants returned home.³¹ Consequently, many poor families in the post-famine period would contain widows, widowers and orphans. After the famine, the widows and widowers 'would have a difficult time in coping in an economy in which family was the central productive unit; remarriages can recreate the family economy, but may not have reconstructed the bonds of affection and loyalty that nourished it'.³² In Indian society, where social sanctions do not easily permit remarriages especially in middle castes, family life in the post-famine period may have been disrupted. Added to that, the impoverished survivors of the famine would be plagued by undernourishment. The children born during and immediately after the famine would be 'weak and sickly'³³ and would continue to be so even when they become adults. Thus, the quality of the labour services that poor families could provide may have been low.

The changes in sex and age composition of poor families and the disruption of their family life coupled with a general decline in the quality of their labour would adversely affect their recovery from the famine. An enormous loss of cattle during the famine period would make their recovery even slower. The scarcity of able-bodied men in their families would incapacitate them in occupying the cultivable wastes, if any, and also their participation in the labour market.

²⁸ Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery of Bengal*, *op.cit.*, p. 220.

²⁹ Vaughan, *African Famine*, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

³⁰ For details on the out-migration from the Madras Presidency during the period 1872-91, see Lardinois, *Famines, Epidemics and Mortality*, *op.cit.*, pp. 458-460. Narrating the effects of famine of 1935 on a Chinese village, an eyewitness wrote: the village 'had a population of 530 people in 76 families. In the winter of 1935, 25 entire families left the village, from each of 39 families one to three persons left the village, leaving only 12 families intact'. See Hao Pun-Sui, 'The Peasant Exodus from Western Shantung' in *Agrarian China: Selected Source Materials from Chinese Authors*, Institute of Pacific Relations, London, 1939, p. 249.

³¹ When Lardinois compared the population of Madras in the 1872 and 1881 censuses, he found that a substantial proportion of the population perished due to the famine in 1876-78. Despite that, in the 1881 census, 95 to 98 per cent of the total population in Madras resided in their district of birth, Lardinois, *Famines, Epidemics and Mortality*, *op.cit.*

³² Watkins *et al.*, *Famines in History*, *op.cit.*, p. 666.

³³ Vaughan, *African Famine*, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36.

Thus, it can be suggested that the slow agrarian expansion that has been observed in many of the societies in the post-famine periods is to be attributed not to the decline in population *per se* but to changes in the age and sex composition of families of poor and small peasants, the disruption of their family life and general decline in the quality of their labour.

On the other hand, while the rich peasants also suffer from the failure of monsoons, they benefit from the widespread deterioration in the economic condition of poor and small peasants during and after the famine. Such deterioration, which precedes the stage of starvation and deaths, gets reflected in the sale of jewellery, ornaments and brass pots.³⁴ This stage will be followed by the relinquishment and/or alienation of land. Authentic evidence on distress sales of land comes from a large scale survey conducted by the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Calcutta. The ISI interviewed 15,769 households in 386 villages and collected information on sales of paddy land and the results were projected for the Bengali population as a whole. During the period mid-April 1943 to mid-April 1944, 9.25 lakhs of families or about 14 per cent of landowning families of Bengal sold some paddy land, whereas nearly 29 per cent of these families sold all of their paddy land. The majority of these families (nearly 88 per cent) were small farmers owning below 5 acres of land. About 60 per cent of the land went into the hands of non-agriculturists (mostly non-residents), while most of the remaining land 'passed into the hands of prosperous cultivators who took advantage of distress sales to enlarge their own holdings'.³⁵ On the other hand, a large number of the small farmers either decreased their land-holdings or gave up cultivation ending up as agricultural labourers or could not be traced.³⁶ The general decline in the economic condition of the small peasants was also reflected in widespread selling of cattle and mortgages of land.³⁷

The recovery of the landlord class would be slower than that of the rich peasants for the following reason. With the elimination of small peasants and the decline in both the number and quality of able-bodied labourers, the demand for land in the lease market would be somewhat low. This might lead to a decline in rents and consequent decline in rental incomes of the landlord class.

³⁴ Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery of Bengal, op.cit.*, pp. 196-197. In fact, the investment in gold and silver (which can be soon liquified in difficult times) is one of the insurance mechanisms devised by the peasants to fight the hunger in the event of famine. See M.D.Morris, 'Needed — A New Famine Policy' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 10, 5-7, 1975 and N.S.Jodha, 'Famine and Famine Policies: Some Empirical Evidence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 10, 41, 1975.

³⁵ P.C. Mahalanobis *et al.*, *A Sample Survey of the After-effects of the Bengal Famine of 1943*, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 34-39.

³⁶ A.Ghose and S.Gupta, 'A Note on the Agrarian Economy in Tabluk Division During 1939-44', *Sankhya*, 8, 1, 1946, pp. 75-78.

³⁷ Mahalanobis *et al.*, *op.cit.*, pp 32 and 42-43.

Thus, the small peasants would experience downward economic mobility during the period of famine. A fast recovery from the famine would be difficult in their case because of changes in age and sex composition of their families, disruption of family life and a general decline in quality of their labour. On the other hand, the rich peasants might benefit from the famine. The recovery from the famine would be faster in the case of rich peasants, while it would be somewhat slow in the case of landlords whose dependence on tenants and agricultural labourers would be relatively more.

Agrarian Background of the District

Before we discuss the impact of the 1876–78 famine on peasant mobility, it may be useful to explain the historical process which rendered some groups more vulnerable to the famine than the others.

When Kurnool District³⁸ was formed in 1858–59, society was already stratified.³⁹ The land revenue system in the first half of the nineteenth century was not only oppressive but also resulted in the emergence of village elite groups who became much more powerful with the cultivation of partially or fully revenue-free *inam* lands. In Kurnool district, there were 47,837 *inam* land titles, comprising an area of 878,913 acres with a hypothetical average land revenue of Rs. 1.05 and the average quit-rent payable on them was only Re.0.43.⁴⁰ Roughly half of the total land was given to individual families or their descendants. These lands, which were the richest, most cultivable and best watered in the district, were controlled by the non-cultivating castes such as Brahmins and cultivating castes such as Reddys and Lingayats, whereas the other middle and lower middle castes (Yadavas and Boyas respectively) were either tenants on the *inam* lands or petty landholders. Besides, they had to hire themselves out to eke out a subsistence. The untouchables (Malas and Madigas) were mainly agricultural labourers.

Between 1860 and 1875, the cultivated area (excluding *inams*) increased at an annual growth rate (compound) of 0.4 per cent, while occupied area

³⁸ The districts of Kurnool, Cuddapah and Bellary were ceded to the East India Company by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800. Though the rights of sovereignty over Kurnool district (then called as Kurnool Proper) were vested with the Company, Muslim rule continued till 1839, when the Nawab was dethroned for his rebellious conduct. For a brief period, the district was administered by an agent to the Governor. The agency administration lasted till 1858–59, when the *taluks* of Cumbum, Markapur and Kolikuntla from the Cuddapah district and that of Pattikonda from Bellary district were added to Kurnool Proper and the whole formed into a Collectorate.

³⁹ For more details, see D. Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility: Changing Agrarian Structure in Kurnool District of Andhra, 1870–1900*, Working Paper No. 233, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, hereafter Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, pp. 10–12.

⁴⁰ A 'Collection of Papers Relating to the Inam Settlement in the Madras Presidency' Madras, 1948, p. 324.

increased at 0.7 per cent. This marginal agrarian expansion was partly due to the increase in prices during the Civil War in the U.S.A. and partly due to the revision of settlement rates in some of the *taluks*.⁴¹ However, the tax burden in some of the *taluks* (such as Cumbum and Markapur) was relatively high.⁴² Consequently, as much as 80 per cent of the total arable area (excluding *inam* lands) was left uncultivated in Markapur *taluk*. The farmers used to abandon the rich fields in the vicinity of the village and occupy inferior and far away fields. The Collector wrote, 'the ryots hold lands of the adjoining village in preference to and not from want of lands in their own villages, and they ascribe it to excessive assessment of their own lands'. In Markapur, the extent of cultivation of *inam* lands was more or less equal to that of government lands and the Collector bemoaned that the ryots, instead of holding proprietary rights on government lands, preferred to be tenants-at-will on *inam* lands.⁴³ In other *taluks* also, the high tax burden resulted in relinquishment of land.⁴⁴

These circumstances placed the Brahmins and Reddys in an advantageous position as they owned most of the *inam* lands. Their accumulation of surplus from the revenue-free *inam* lands rose during the period of rising prices in the early 1860s.⁴⁵ In Kurnool district, 25 per cent of the Brahmins derived their income from landed property. The Commissioner of 1872 Census remarked that:

as a rule, Brahmin cultivators secured the best lands in the country. By the proceeds of land, tilled by serf labour, they have increased in substance and grown wealthy... the Brahmins have gradually shifted their position from that of mere priests, purohits... to the more substantial one of landed aristocracy.⁴⁶

The condition of small farmers and tenants was not very encouraging. Despite rising cotton prices, the cultivation of cotton did not pick up

⁴¹ Letter from the Collector of Kurnool to the Board, *Proceedings of Board of Revenue*, hereafter *PBR*, April 28, 1865, p. 2225.

⁴² In these *taluks*, the share of assessment to total gross produce on ordinary lands was 19 per cent in 1862-63. However, with the decline in prices, it increased to 25 per cent in 1873-74. Calculated from *ibid*, p. 2236.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2225-2231.

⁴⁴ M G K. Chetty, *Kurnool District Manual*, Madras, 1886, hereafter Chetty, *Kurnool District Manual*, p. 51; *Settlement Report of Pattikonda Taluk*, p. 4210, *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool*, *PBR*, April 1, 1875, p. 2509, *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool*, *PBR*, May 24, 1876, p. 4613

⁴⁵ 'During the American war the cotton producers had prosperous time of it Land-owners invested their unusual profits in land', *Settlement Report of Kolkuntla Taluk*, 1871, p. 7

⁴⁶ *Census of India, Madras*, 1872

mainly due to the low incomes of small farmers and tenants. In 1863, their estimated monthly income was only Re. 0.50. Hence, it was not surprising that 'a new demand, like that which has arisen for cotton, should meet with but a feeble response'.⁴⁷ Thus, the price boom of the 1860s seemed to have bypassed the small peasantry. Moreover, the farmers found it difficult to pay the land revenue and there was a gradual increase in the arrears for which coercive processes were issued and sales were resorted to.⁴⁸ The exorbitant land revenue rates (and payment in cash) compelled the small peasantry to get into the debt trap.⁴⁹

Between 1865-66 and 1871-72, the population of the district increased by 18 per cent. A consequent increase in family size would have induced the small farmers to bring those cultivable wastes under plough where assessments were tolerable. In fact, the labouring class was 'struggling to rise to the position of landed proprietors'.⁵⁰ Since their monthly income was small, these petty landowners resorted to supplementary means of subsistence such as hiring out for agricultural work, stone quarrying, plying bullock carts and cotton spinning.⁵¹ The construction of the Kurnool-Cuddapah canal also enhanced the job opportunities. With the availability of cultivable wastes and employment opportunities, the small peasant was 'endeavouring to better his condition'.⁵² However, such an endeavour was, perhaps, affected by the high tax burden. So when the famine struck in 1876, certain sections of the peasantry in the district were already vulnerable.

The 1876-78 Famine and Population of the District

The monsoon of 1876-77 was the 'worst within the memory of the oldest inhabitant' in the district. The south-west monsoon was scanty, while the north-east monsoon was a total failure. There was a general failure of crops; prices increased sharply and the Great Famine had struck. Next year, the rainfall was deficient and unseasonal. And the Great Famine continued to ravage the district for the second successive year.

⁴⁷ *Settlement Report of Kurnool Proper*, para 36.

⁴⁸ The amount of arrears for which coercive processes were issued increased from Rs. 8,155 in the triennium ending with 1870-71 to Rs. 1 04 lakhs in that ending with 1875-76. The amount of arrears for which sales were resorted increased from Rs. 3,445 to Rs. 10,275 during the same period, C. Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool District Based on An Analysis of Statistical Information Relating Thereto, and on Personal Observation*, Madras, 1889, hereafter Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ *Settlement Report of Koilkuntla Taluk*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *Settlement Report of Kurnool Proper*, para 36.

⁵¹ *Settlement Report of Koilkuntla Taluk*, p. 7.

⁵² *Settlement Report of Kurnool Proper*, para 37.

The famine had a devastating impact on the population of the district: The mortality rate (based on registered deaths)⁵³ increased by 400 per cent in 1877 and by over 200 per cent in 1878 (Figure 1). The death rate remained high in the post-famine period mainly due to epidemic diseases. The district lost about one-fourth of its population. Did a decline in food availability cause this loss?

Figure 1: Birth and Death Rates in Kurnool
(1872-1900)

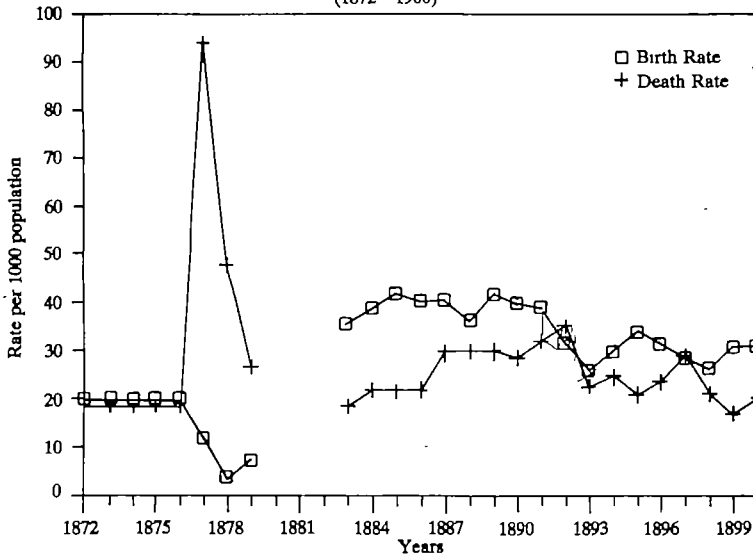


Table 1

Changes in Population in Kurnool District (1872-1901)

Period	Percentage change
1872-1881	-25.80
1881-1891	20.52
1891-1901	6.60
1872-1901	-4.63

Source: *Census of India, Madras*, for the years 1872, 1881, 1891 and 1901.

⁵³ As the collection of vital statistics was started only in the late 1860s, the imperfections in the system were many. The village servants, who collected data on vital events, in the absence of any legislation and extra amount of remuneration for this work, showed little interest. So, there was an under-registration of the births and deaths, especially of females. This problem became more acute in 1877, as the village servants wandered away from the villages in search of food. Besides, the people who left the villages for food or work 'perished by the road sides, in ditches, in jungle paths, and away from human habitations. . . it is probable that all mortality occurring this way was left unrecognised'. However, notwithstanding the disorganized village administration system and disrupted life, the registration of deaths clearly portrayed the intensity of famine in all the severely affected areas. *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, 1877*, Madras, 1878, hereafter *Report of the Sanitary Commissioner*, p. 75.

The district was self-sufficient in food upto 1875–76. In 1875–76, the estimated total food production and consumption were 4.52 and 2.11 lakh tons respectively, thus leaving a surplus of 2.41 lakh tons. At the rate of annual consumption of 4 cwt of grains per person, this stock would feed the population for more than one year.⁵⁴ Besides, as a result of famine, the imports of agricultural produce into the region increased from 535 maunds in 1875 to 1.18 lakh maunds in 1877 of which more than 97 per cent were foodgrains. Even then, the prices of foodgrains increased⁵⁵ due to the following factors. First, the bigger farmers stored large quantities of grain in underground pits. The Sanitary Commissioner wrote in 1877:

It is certain that the more substantial of the farmers, artisans did hold, throughout the famine, considerable reserves of these dry grains, and that even the very extraordinary prices obtainable for them did not tempt the holders to get rid of their stores while the prospects of continuance of famine were imminent. I became acquainted with an instance of a substantial ryot in Bellary district, who, all through the famine brought imported food at high prices for his labourers and household, and who at the same time, had several pits stored with about 50,000 seers of old grain, which he kept as an assurance against starvation, but which he would not open till the prospects of a new crop were assured. This one instance was probably multiplied by thousands and ... the collector of Cuddapah informed me that after a plentiful fall of rain, old grain came out of the hidden store.⁵⁶

Second, it was not uncommon to store the foodgrains when the prices were low. In most cases, the traders and wealthy farmers were reluctant to release the stocks as there were instances of attack from the starving people.⁵⁷

Thus there was no drastic decline in food availability in the district in 1876–77. Yet, the death rate rapidly increased mainly due to the failure in exchange entitlements. The failure of rains reduced employment opportunities, thus resulting in a decline in purchasing power. Hence, notwithstanding the imports and availability of foodgrains 'an enormous number

⁵⁴ Taking the average area for the period 1872–73–1875–76 and yield figures presented by the Collector and the Settlement Department, the Board estimated that total food production was 4.52 lakh tons. Deducting 16,000 tons for seed requirements and 1.95 lakh tons for human consumption (at the rate of 1.5 lbs per diem), it was estimated that the surplus in the district was 2.41 lakh tons (*PBR*, December 19, 1878, pp. 11106–11122). These figures were fairly reliable for Kurnool as there were no Zamindaris. Moreover, the yield figures for the district were based on actual experiments.

⁵⁵ Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 and 16a

⁵⁶ *Report of the Sanitary Commissioner*, p. 9

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

of poorer classes of the people ... have perished miserably, *simply from their inability to procure sufficiency of wholesale food*'⁵⁸ (emphasis added). The colonial government attributed the phenomenal loss of population to the transport bottle-necks. However, the population loss in areas well served with transport (such as Pattikonda) was high compared to irrigated areas (such as Sirvel and Nandyal) where though transport was ill-developed, better employment opportunities improved entitlement to the food.⁵⁹ In the absence of output figures, the discussion on food availability decline must remain incomplete, but these considerations suggest that food availability decline was not the main reason for the enormous loss of population in the district.

Slow Recovery of Population

More importantly, the recovery of population was slow in the district. The growth of population, which was somewhat faster in the 1880s, slowed down in the 1890s due to the famines in that decade (Table 1). How fast a region could recover its population depended on changes in the age-wise composition of population brought about by differential mortality rates and out-migration. Let us, therefore, examine changes in the age and sex composition of population, fertility rates and out-migration during and after the famine.

The increase in the death rate was uneven across socioeconomic groups, sexes and age-groups. The famine had a severe impact on the depressed castes. When crops failed, the agricultural operations came to a standstill, resulting in drying up of employment opportunities. Prices increased due to the hoarding of food stocks, and the tenants and small ryots who were also part-labourers suffered. With the decline in demand for manufactured goods such as cloth and the non-availability of raw materials many weavers were thrown out of employment. They could stay in the villages till their cattle and jewellery were sold and credit dried up. Later on, they wandered or reached the relief camps. However, many people were soon exhausted and mortality rates started showing an upward trend.⁶⁰ As caste-wise mortality rates are not available, a comparison of population loss across castes in the district between 1872 and 1881 is made in Table 2. It reveals that the population of Madigas, Boyas, Chenchus and artisans declined at a

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ The fallacy of food availability decline approach is evident in the following statement: 'The loss of life depended chiefly on the accessibility of the taluks for the supply of grain, and the comparative richness of the country. Thus, the parts of Ramallakot, most distant from the railways, are much richer than greater part of Pattikonda' and hence, the loss was relatively low in the former (Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool*, op. cit., p. 7)

⁶⁰ See *Report of the Famine Commission*, op. cit., pp. 17-18

faster rate than that of the Brahmins and cultivating castes such as Reddys. In some *taluks*, the loss of Madigas was as much as 50 per cent. The relief officers also noted that 'the great out-caste or paria tribes, and the lower divisions of Hindu agricultural castes were the chief victims (of the famine). The Brahmins and trading castes of Hindus suffered but little or not at all'.⁶¹

Table 2

Changes (%) in Caste-wise Population of Kurnool (1872-1881)

<i>Castes</i>	<i>PK</i>	<i>RK</i>	<i>NK</i>	<i>NL</i>	<i>KK</i>	<i>SL</i>	<i>CM</i>	<i>MP</i>	<i>Total</i>
Brahmins	-14.8	-14.1	-25.3	-19.9	-33.9	-0.5	-11.5	-11.5	-17.2
NBUC	-23.0	-37.0	-21.8	-21.6	-54.7	35.5	-14.3	-11.2	-21.4
Yadavas	-28.9	-30.8	-35.0	-27.0	-33.8	-4.0	-16.1	-10.1	-25.1
Artisans	-45.1	-40.3	-32.1	-26.1	-49.6	15.8	-8.6	-1.7	-28.3
Boyas	-45.5	-38.2	-35.6	-41.5	-47.9	17.9	-17.8	-30.3	-37.9
Chenchus	-52.9	-39.6	-12.3	-38.5	-57.1	20.4	9.0	-1.0	-27.5
Madigas	-50.7	-42.3	-35.1	-36.4	-31.4	-25.7	-15.7	-36.8	-35.6
Muslims	-39.4	-30.6	-31.5	-22.9	-11.4	-24.6	-6.3	-3.6	-24.2
Total	-39.3	-35.6	-29.2	-28.6	-43.2	5.7	-12.0	-14.4	-27.3

Sources: 1. *Census of India, Madras, 1872.*

2. *Census of India, 1881, Taluk War Returns, Kurnool District.*

Notes: PK = Pattikonda RK = Ramallakot NK = Nandikotkur
 NL = Nandyal KK = Koilkuntla SL = Sirvel
 CM = Cumbum MP = Markapur
 NBUC = Non-Brahmin upper castes.

Among the sexes, the males perished more⁶² as they 'left their villages in large numbers, flocking to food markets and centres of relief works. They exhausted their energies sooner than the females'.⁶³ Since the government did not fully realise the intensity of the famine in the initial months, there was some delay in the setting up of relief works. Hence some men and boys, in their reckless wandering, died in 'jungles, road sides and ditches'. Added to that, they came into contact with epidemic diseases, widely prevalent at the site of relief works. On the other hand, as the females and older people were left behind in the villages (which were relatively less affected by diseases), their survival chances were enhanced. Moreover, gratuitous relief was extended more easily to women and aged people, as compared to the 'able-bodied men'. Consequently, as the statistics of famine

⁶¹ W.R. Cornish, 'The Influence of Famine on Growth of Population', published as an Appendix to *Report of the Sanitary Commissioner*, p. lxxxviii.

⁶² In 1877, the death rate (per 1000 population) of females was 84, while that of males was as much as 95.

⁶³ *Report of the Sanitary Commissioner, op. cit.*, p. lxxiv.

hospitals and relief camps showed, the adult men and boys 'died in a ratio of about 20 per cent in excess of the females'.⁶⁴ A corroboration to this can be found in an improved female to male ratio in all the famine districts, including Kurnool, in 1881.⁶⁵

Moreover, the birth rate also declined (Figure 1). Such a decline, it was argued by the contemporary demographers, was due to the reckless wandering of village servants and consequent under-registration. However, as Cornish argued, 'it cannot be said that registration as a whole has fallen off in 1877, for in the areas of country more severely affected by famine, the death registration has been four or five times in excess of the average registration of the past five years. Nor can it be supposed that the many thousands of village servants scattered over the country ... have entered into a combination amongst themselves to render fictitious entries of deaths, and to systematically omit the births'.⁶⁶ Thus, though birth rates were not able to capture the picture fully, they nevertheless show the broad trends.

That the birth rate had declined can be established by the children to women ratio. Though this is an imperfect measure of the level of the birth rate, it has the advantage of being calculable for each census year. Table 3 shows a faster decline in the ratio of children between 0 and 4 years to women (15-45 years of age) in Kurnool district as compared to the non-famine district of Godavari. This is corroborated by Cornish's enquiries, which brought out "overwhelming evidence to show that pregnancy in the famine-stricken zone (after the earlier months of distress) was a very rare condition; that in young women the period of puberty had been retarded; and that the special functions relating to generation were, in the more marked cases of physical emaciation, altogether in abeyance".⁶⁷ The decline in birth rate was due to the following: (a) Demographic reasons: The number of women exposed to the risk of conceiving varies under the effect of the mortality and the disturbances in nuptiality rates; (b) Medical and sanitary reasons: The general state of malnutrition brought about a loss in the weight of individuals ranging from 20 to 30 per cent. The tests carried out at the relief camps revealed that the men who formerly weighed on an average 50 to 54 kg did not weigh more than 35 kg, while the weights of women, which on ordinary days were 43 to 45 kg, fell to 28 kg. Human

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* A special census, conducted by Cornish in a large number of villages in the Presidency, supported this observation. The results of the census are controversial, because: (a) The 1872 census, with which the results of the special census were compared, under-enumerated the females (b) As Cornish himself admitted, the higher male mortality could be in some degree due to 'the imperfect way in which the female mortality was registered', *Report of Sanitary Commissioner, op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁶⁵ *Census of India, 1881, Madras Presidency.* However, this is also subject to the limitations explained in footnote 64.

⁶⁶ *Report of Sanitary Commissioner, op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

beings can tolerate loss of weight to the tune of 5 to 10 per cent, with little functional disorganisation. However, a loss of 35 to 40 per cent would result in death and before that, it must have resulted in the stoppage of ovular cycles for women; (c) Social reasons: A large number of couples were affected by migration or lack of privacy in the relief camps.⁶⁸

Table 3

Children (0-4) to Women (15-45) Ratios in the Population in Kurnool and Selected Non-famine Districts

Districts	Ratios			Indices (1872 = 100)	
	1872	1881	1891	1881	1891
Kurnool	0.639	0.262	0.586	41.0	91.7
Godavari	0.710	0.631	0.633	88.9	89.1

Source: *Census of India, Madras*, for the years 1872, 1881 and 1891.

The lower birth rate, higher male mortality rate and lower mortality rates for females and old people brought about striking changes in the age-wise distribution of population (Table 4). The loss of male population (15-40 years) was lower compared to that of females (15-40 years), males (40-60 years) and children. However, the growth of both males and females in the age group of 15-40 years in the later decades was either slow or declining. A decline in the population in the reproductive age groups had reduced the fertility. Moreover, a substantial loss of population in the age group of 15-60 resulted in a large number of widowed; in 1881 nearly 30 per cent of total females in the district were widows and this figure was one of the highest in the Presidency. Most of the widows were found in the age group of 30-50 and their remarriages were not always easy because of social customs, while widowers could not simply afford them.⁶⁹

Table 4

Age-wise Change (%) of Population in Kurnool (1872-1901)

Age groups	1872-81			1881-91			1891-1901		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
0-15	-34.34	-31.20	-32.83	16.95	-17.18	17.06	20.04	20.59	20.31
15-40	-22.73	-25.87	-24.29	5.67	10.02	7.78	-10.68	-7.44	-9.07
40-60	-23.60	-18.55	-21.16	32.96	18.68	25.84	16.34	15.52	15.95
60+	-5.54	19.52	7.00	39.43	36.50	37.79	18.22	5.03	10.91
Total	-26.81	-25.26	-26.05	15.21	15.31	15.26	6.44	6.93	6.69

Source: *Census of India, Madras, Age Tables*, for the years 1872, 1881, 1891 and 1901.

⁶⁸ Lardinois, *Famines, Epidemics and Mortality*, op. cit., p. 462.

⁶⁹ Analysing the civil conditions in the Presidency, the Census Commissioner remarked

Consequently, as Table 3 shows, the fertility rate was low in the district. Thus, an enormous loss of children and the existence of a large number of widows and widowers coupled with recurring famines in the 1890s slowed down the recovery of population in the district.

Migration

One might argue that such a slow recovery of population, especially those in the age group of 15–40, was due to out-migration. It is difficult to estimate out-migration from a district, since people born in the district and enumerated in other Presidencies would be classified as born in the Madras Presidency. However, unlike those migrated to Ceylon from the Tamil countryside, the people in the district were not found to be very mobile. They either migrated to the neighbouring delta district of Kistna or to Nellore district to work for the construction of the Buckingham canal.⁷⁰ The proportion of out-migrants in the total population was 5.27 in 1881 and it declined to 4.30 in 1891, mainly due to an increase in the total population. Moreover, the majority of the out-migrants was found in the neighbouring districts, implying it to be marriage-induced migration.⁷¹ Thus, the proportion of out-migrants was too small to affect the recovery of population.

Agrarian Expansion

The famine affected the agrarian expansion very severely. The cultivated area declined from 21 lakh acres in the triennium ending with 1874–75 to 15 lakh acres in that ending with 1879–80 (Table 5). Between 1872–73 and 1885–86, the decline in cultivated and occupied area was 16 and 11 per cent respectively; a faster decline in the former indicates that much of the area was kept as current fallows. More importantly, the district did not regain its cultivated/occupied area even by the turn of the century. As prices were on the rise from mid-1880s, one would expect the agrarian expansion to take place at a faster rate. In fact, the slow agrarian expansion in Rayalaseema in general and Kurnool district in particular received the constant attention of the revenue-oriented government.

that the large number of widowed 'noticed for the famine districts explain themselves, because they occur in the famine districts. In the great mortality, an abnormal number of husbands and wives died. The wives of the former have not remarried, because law and custom do not allow it; the husbands of the latter have not remarried, because they cannot afford to do so'. *Census of India, Madras, 1881*, Vol. 1, p. 73.

⁷⁰ The Collector's replies to the Famine Commission reveal that no emigration from this district was recorded. *Report of the Famine Commission, op. cit.*, pp. 297 and 303.

⁷¹ For more details, see Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility, op. cit.*, pp. 22–23.

Compared with the year which preceded the great famine of 1876–78, the increase in (cultivated) holdings (in Madras Presidency) ... would amount to 1.78 million acres This improvement was shared by all the districts except Cuddapah, Anantapur and Kurnool.⁷²

The deficiency in the district was as large as 64,090 acres (excluding *inams*), in 1897–98. On enquiries from the government, the Collector suggested that the loss of population was the major reason for this slow expansion.⁷³ As the cultivated holdings were held back till as late as the early nineties, the government was left unconvinced by this explanation. Further, the Collector offered the following explanations.

Table 5

Cultivated and Occupied Area (including inams) in Kurnool (1871–72–1899–1900)

<i>Triennium ending with</i>	<i>Cultivated Area (in '000 acres)</i>	<i>Occupied Area (in '000 acres)</i>
1874–75	2078	2293
1879–80	1469	n.a.
1882–83	1561	n.a.
1885–86	1738	2044
1888–89	1847	2062
1891–92	1862	2106
1894–95	1896	2098
1897–98	1851	2121
1899–1900*	1875	2108

* Two-yearly average.

Sources: 1) For the years 1872–73 to 1890–91, *Statistical Returns of Madras Presidency, PBR*, Various issues.

2) For the years 1891–92 to 1899–1900, *Indian Agricultural Statistics*, Various issues.

First, he argued that a significant proportion of total cultivable wastes was reserved as forests to provide fuel and fodder. And whenever the ryots wanted to cultivate these lands, the district administration was unable to grant *pattas* as they came under the purview of the Forest Department. However, when the Collector was granted permission to issue *pattas*, it was found that such reservation did not have 'any material influence in retarding the recovery of the district'.⁷⁴ The Collector also admitted that

⁷² See *PBR*, No. 30, February 27, 1901, p. 250. Similar statements were made in *PBR*, No. 77, Feb 26, 1900, p. 233 and also *PBR*, No. 30, Feb 28, 1902, p. 201.

⁷³ *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool, 1882–83*, pp. 3–4.

⁷⁴ In four *taluks* (in which this phenomenon was alleged to be prominent) the total land that was set free was 79,997 acres, out of which the assessed land was only 34,797 acres. Despite the efforts made by the district administration for five years, only 6,223 acres were brought under cultivation. See *PBR*, No. 260, July 20, 1898, p. 11.

hat over-reservation was 'not the reason for the great decrease in cultivation'.⁷⁵

The second reason attributed to the slow agrarian expansion was the temporary fallowing of poor soils to recuperate their fertility. As leaving lands fallow was a part of the cultivation practices, relinquishments were frequent in Markapur, Nandikotkur and Pattikonda *taluks* where the soils were poor.⁷⁶ However, this explanation does not hold true for the following reasons. First, after the turn of the century, poor soils in the district were increasingly occupied. Second, the relatively high average assessment on lands relinquished implies that they were of good quality. Third, the Collector's reports in the early nineties indicate that the black soil *taluks* also had significant extent of cultivable wastes.⁷⁷ Benson also showed that the unoccupied lands in many tracts were of fair quality.⁷⁸ An important reason⁷⁹ attributed to the non-occupation of these lands was the sparseness of population.⁸⁰

The sparseness of population *per se* was not the important reason; rather it was the changes in the age composition of population brought about by the famine. A substantial loss of children during the period of famine reduced the number of adult males and females in the 1880s as well as in the 1890s and resulted in an unfavourable composition of population. We have worked out the dependency ratio (DR) (the number of dependents per male in the age group of 15-60) for the period 1872-1911 (Table 6). The DR, which was 2.38 in 1872, marginally declined to 2.24 in 1881. It increased to 2.32 in 1891 and to 2.64 in 1901. This increase in DR would have been very marked in families belonging especially to the depressed castes as they were the chief victims of the famine.

Table 6

Dependency Ratios in Kurnool

Years	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911
Dependency ratios	2.38	2.24	2.32	2.64	2.54

⁷⁵ PBR, No. 30, February 28, 1902, p. 81.

⁷⁶ PBR, No. 36, February 15, 1895, p. 2. And also *Settlement Report of Kurnool, 1893-94*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ The percentages of cultivable wastes to the total cultivable area in the black soil *taluks* of Sirvel, Ramallakot and Nandyal were 20.38, 19.48 and 19.29 respectively in 1895. See PBR, No. 36, February 15, 1895, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁷⁹ Another reason was the overspread of *nath* grass the removal of which required deep tillage with a few pairs of bullocks which the poor people were unable to bear. We admit that this was one of the important reasons. But problems of weeding and so on did exist in the red soil *taluks* also.

⁸⁰ PBR, No. 481, November 17, 1894; and also PBR, No. 36, February 15, 1895.

Such an increase in the DR adversely affected the agrarian expansion in the following ways. First, in dry regions the cultivable wastes were generally not preferred by richer peasants as these were less fertile and located far from the villages. Hence, these lands were usually brought under the plough mainly by the hardworking small and poor peasants with family labour. A comparison of caste-wise acquisition of cultivable wastes in a village in the district during the period 1891 to 1948 shows that it was small farmers belonging to Yadava, Boya and Muslim communities who occupied most of the cultivable wastes.⁸¹ However, as there was a change in the composition of families in the post-famine period, family labour was hard to come by.⁸² Second, such peasants in the post-famine period were extremely impoverished. A Settlement Officer remarked (in 1905): 'The survivors among the ryots were impoverished, many doubtless had deteriorated physically. A new generation has grown up, but the memory of the great famine still lives and has increased the dull fatalism of the ryots'.⁸³ Third, family life was severely affected in the post-famine period. After the famine, widows, widowers and orphans must have found it difficult to cope in an economy where the family was the central productive unit. These circumstances might have changed the labour participation rates or led to an intensification of labour effort. But it is doubtful whether such changes had any significant impact on the extension of cultivation. Thus, the poor and small peasants were at a disadvantage as far as the extension of the cultivation and reoccupation of the lands relinquished were concerned.

Even if richer peasants wanted to occupy the cultivable wastes, the reduction in the number of labourers and tenants in the district acted as a constraint. A substantial loss of population (belonging mainly to agricultural labourer castes) coupled with some out-migration had reduced the number of working hands available in the district.

It is difficult to establish the actual decline in the number of labourers as data on occupational distribution of population in 1872 are not comparable with those in 1881. Hence, the trends in population belonging to the agricultural labourer castes such as Mala, Madiga and Boya are taken as a proxy for the trends in agricultural labourers in the district. This method is justified on the grounds that there was little occupational mobility during this period. The proportion of Madigas, Malas and Boyas in the total population declined from 29 in 1872 to 25 and remained virtually the same

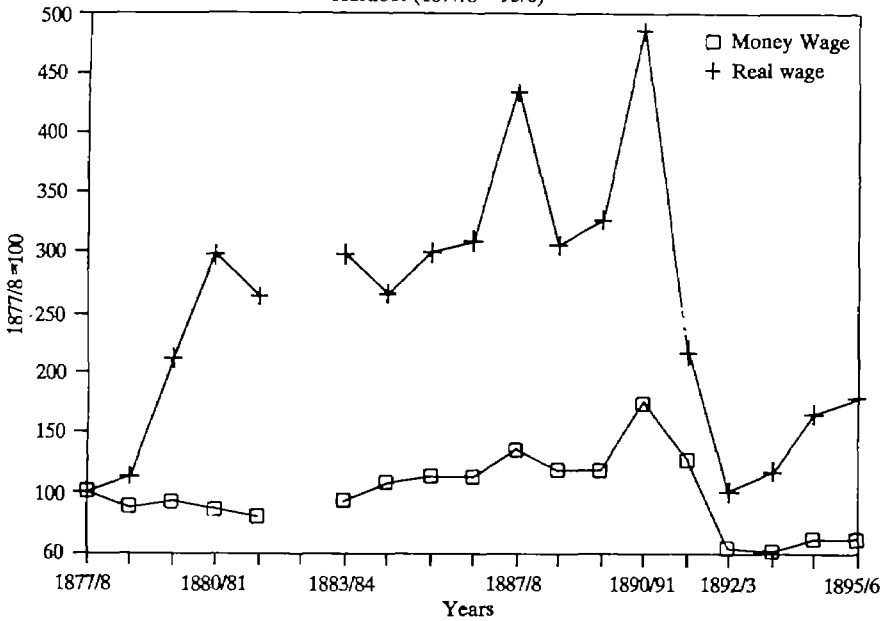
⁸¹ D. Rajasekhar, *Land Transfers and Family Partitioning: A Historical Study of an Andhra Village* (New Delhi, 1988), pp. 18-20.

⁸² An enquiry into the causes of non-occupation of cultivable wastes in Anantapur district also showed that 'paucity of cultivating ryots' was the chief reason for the lack of agrarian expansion, *PBR*, No. 103, May 1, 1895, p. 7. This was the case in Bellary also: 'the lands now waste are so chiefly from the want of people to cultivate them', *PBR*, No. 2207, August 1, 1883, p. 5.

⁸³ Settlement Report of Pattikonda Taluk of Kurnool District, *PBR*, No. 132, April 27, 1906.

in 1891. As a result, the money and real wages of casual labourers in the district were not only high but also were rapidly increasing during the period 1877–1891 (Figure 2). In contrast, rapid population growth along with immigration into the deltaic districts resulted in larger labour availability and lower wages.⁸⁴

Figure 2: Index of Money and Real Wages
Kurnool (1877/8 – 95/6)



Loss of Livestock

The famine had greatly reduced the cattle population; the Collector's estimate of the loss was 40 per cent.⁸⁵ Consequently, the availability of ploughing cattle was small, around six to eight bullocks per 100 acres of tilled area in the district.⁸⁶ However, considering the fact that the data on ploughing animals related to both bulls and bullocks, the number of bullocks per 100 acres of sown area must have been even smaller. Thus, the ploughing

⁸⁴ In Kurnool district, the average annual wage rate for rural unskilled labour ranged between 3 to 6 annas, while in Godavari district it ranged between 2 to 3 annas, G.N. Rao, 'Transition from Subsistence to Commercialised Agriculture: A Study of Krishna District of Andhra, c 1850–1900', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, June 22–29, 1985, pp. A-65.

⁸⁵ *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool, 1876–77*, *op cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ For more details on loss of livestock, see D. Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, *op cit.* pp 28–29.

animals were insufficient for good tillage as well as for the extension of cultivation in the district.⁸⁷

Tax Burden

Regarding the tax burden as an impediment to the agrarian expansion, the evidence is mixed. The average assessment was around one rupee per acre of dry land in most of the *taluks*. The increase in prices reduced the percentage of assessment in the gross produce from 12 in the triennium ending with 1885–86 to 8.83 in that ending with 1898–99,⁸⁸ and thereby lessened the burden of taxation. However, in the *taluks* of Koilkuntla and Pattikonda, the assessments were heavy,⁸⁹ a fact which was acknowledged even by the Board of Revenue.⁹⁰ Benson also showed that 'good lands in these taluks (especially in Pattikonda) were left waste, because of extraordinarily high average assessment on them'.⁹¹

Changes in Cropping Pattern

The slow agrarian expansion was, to some extent, due to the partial development of commodity market. Though the prices started increasing from the mid-1880s, the product market failed to gain momentum due to the recurring famines. Soon after the famine struck, the peasantry showed preference for raising food crops.⁹² Consequently, the area under non-food crops declined from 17.71 per cent in the triennium ending with 1875–76 to 13.73 per cent in that ending with 1879–80. Since the decade 1881–91 was free from famines, the farmers began to make efforts to grow cash crops and

⁸⁷ C. Benson, who toured the Greater Bellary and Cuddapah districts in the early 1880s, remarked that, 'nothing struck me more than the seeming dearth of cattle Even in ordinary times ... it does not seem likely that enough cattle would be available to the ryots', *PBR*, February 19, 1881, pp. 876–877.

⁸⁸ For more details, see Table 10 in Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, *op. cit.*

⁸⁹ In the *taluks* of Pattikonda and Koilkuntla, the commutation rates were fixed on the basis of district average prices. Benson's comparison of the commutation rates with local prices shows that the settlement rates were 'little favourable to the ryot at Pattikonda and a little less favourable at Koilkuntla'. He noted that such high assessment rates would 'prevent any accumulation by the ryots' and would not enable them to 'form a reserve store on which to support themselves during an unfavourable season', Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁹⁰ Regarding Benson's observation that the assessments were high in Koilkuntla and Pattikonda *taluks*, the Board commented that he 'may possibly be right, but the question need not be discussed' as the government already ruled out the possibility of revising the assessment rates in these *taluks*. See *PBR*, No. 262, May 29, 1889, p. 17.

⁹¹ Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁹² In the years following the famine, 'the ryots sowed as much land as possible with food grains' See *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool, 1878–79*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

thus took advantage of the rising prices. However, the famines of 1891-92, 1896-97 and 1899-1900 compelled them to switch back to the food crops. Consequently, the share of area under food crops increased from 74.85 per cent in the triennium ending with 1888-89 to 79.08 per cent in that ending with 1899-1900.

Thus, notwithstanding the development of trade and transport,⁹³ the commodity market could not gain momentum mainly due to the recurring famines in 1890s. But the impact of this was not the same across the various strata of the peasantry. For instance, the proportion of cotton area on *inam* lands was high compared to that on government lands during the period 1879-80-1891-92. Since rich peasants possessed most of the *inam* lands, they were in a better position as far as the cultivation of cash crops was concerned.

Economic Mobility of Rural Households (1875-1900)

Although the failure of crops was complete during the famine period, the percentage of land that was given remission was only 29 in 1876-77 and 12 in 1877-78. While dry remissions were not given to larger *pattadars* who were considered to be in a better position to pay the land revenue,⁹⁴ those given to the poor were insufficient. In the post-famine period, an enormous loss of population and livestock led to a large extent of current fallows; yet remissions were not given on these lands. Added to that, the ryots were unwilling to cultivate the lands saddled with arrears for which the crops on the land were liable to be seized.⁹⁵ As the lands with outstanding arrears could not be relinquished till 1879-80, the farmers fled and only a few turned up when the government tried to reinstate them in the late 1880s and 1890s.⁹⁶

These factors resulted in an accumulation of land revenue arrears on a scale which was unprecedented in the district. In 1879-80, coercive policies had to be employed for the recovery of as much as 78 per cent of total collections. In the succeeding years, this figure ranged between 50 to 60 per cent. In the triennium ending with 1881-82, the amount for which coercive processes were issued was Rs. 9 lakhs! (Table 7). The colonial

⁹³ For details on the development of trade and transport in the district during this period, see D. Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

⁹⁴ Benson, *An Account of the Kurnool*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁹⁵ *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool, 1879-80*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹⁶ In 1883, the Collector had given widest publicity to the persons dispossessed during the period of famine to occupy the lands. Yet he received only a few applications from the returning migrants. *Annual Settlement Reports of Kurnool*, *op. cit.*, for the years 1882-83 to 1884-85

government found it very difficult to apply pressure in the absence of movable property with the ryots. The Collector unashamedly regretted that 'the heavy loss of cattle sustained by the ryots has deprived us a most ready means of recovering the government dues': All that could be collected by distraining the crops and any movable property was realised. It was soon realised that in many cases the arrears could not be recovered as the ryots had deserted the villages without relinquishing their lands.⁹⁷

Table 7

Coercive Processes Employed in Land Revenue Collections

Triennium	1	2	3	4	5	6
1878-79	35,304	443,596	1,159	23,609	14,559	11,004
1881-82	110,709	863,679	8,104	183,023	178,534	79,411
1884-85	98,231	361,988	1,475	24,392	24,840	15,380
1887-88	109,776	314,110	1,004	4,370	20,798	3,172
1890-91	105,766	n.a	174	3,321	n.a	1,946
1893-94	179,527	n.a	315	3,935	n.a	3,608
1896-97	150,312	n.a	133	1,684	n.a	2,737
1899-1900	214,553	n.a	474	5,784	n.a	4,776

Source: *Reports on the Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Provinces Under the Madras Presidency*, for the relevant years.

1 = Number of defaulters against whom coercive processes issued.

2 = Amount of arrears for which coercive processes issued.

3 = Number of defaulters whose property was actually sold.

4 = Amount of arrears for which the property was actually sold.

5 = Estimated value of the property

6 = Amount realised from property sold.

Consequently, the government had to resort to auctioning of lands. The number of defaulters whose property was sold (and also the amount for which property was sold) was small compared to those against whom the coercive processes were issued. This does not, however, mean that majority of the defaulters were subsequently able to pay the land revenue. The payments were made either by borrowing or by alienation of land in private transactions. This was done partly to avoid the payment of process fees and partly due to the fact that the lands in the auction were sold at extremely low rates.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Based on the *Annual Settlement Reports of Kurnool*, *op. cit.*, for the years 1878-79, 1879-80 and 1880-81.

⁹⁸ After examining the total transacted area and prices in the district for the period 1882-86, C. Benson arrived at Rs. 16 per acre as average land value in the district, Benson, *An Account*

We have data on the land transacted both in the registered and auction sales during the period 1875-76-1886-87 (Table 8). The total land transacted was significantly high during the period 1879-80-1884-85. Precisely during this period, the colonial government was ruthlessly collecting the revenue arrears. Hence, we suggest that these lands were transferred under the compulsion to clear off the land revenue arrears. A second point that emerges from Table 8 is that lands alienated in the registered as well as in auction sales to private individuals were of high quality. The average assessment on these lands was consistently higher compared to that on the lands alienated to the government, except in the year 1884-85. This implies that the best lands had a ready market. We do not have data on the class position of the buyers of these lands. Given the miserable conditions of the small farmers, it is reasonable to suppose that the rich farmers had acquired these lands.

Table 8

*Lands Transacted in the Registered Sales and at the Auction Sales.
(Area in acres and assessment in Rs per acre)*

Year	Registered sales		Auction sales			
	Area	AA	Bought by individuals	AA	Bought by government	AA
1875-76	10,891	1.19				
1876-77	12,511	1.15				
1877-78	8,179	1.02				
1878-79	9,186	1.22				
1879-80	20,657	1.31			49,744	0.61
1880-81	31,014	1.27			31,395	0.70
1881-82	14,743	1.40	3,296	1.22	7,253	0.78
1882-83	14,157	1.32	821	1.34	1,529	1.11
1883-84	10,558	1.32	1,176	1.31	1,351	1.03
1884-85	11,337	1.35	1,203	1.27	1,133	1.53
1886-87	9,470	1.26	327	1.39	433	1.07

AA = Average assessment.

Source: As in Table 7.

Again the rich peasants occupied the best lands relinquished by the poor during and after the famine. Consequently, the average assessment on lands relinquished was Re. 0.71 per acre, while that on lands taken up was Re. 0.86 per acre during the period 1875-76-1879-80. On the other hand,

of the Kurnool, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105. During the same period, average price realised at the revenue sale was only Re. 0.80 per acre. *Annual Settlement Reports of Kurnool, op. cit.*, for the period 1881-82 to 1885-86.

the poor occupied some of the inferior lands due to higher assessment on best lands. During the non-famine period of 1880s, the assessments on lands taken up were generally low compared to that on lands relinquished.⁹⁹ The same was noted in 1881–82: ‘while the lands brought to revenue sales were high class lands, those newly taken up on *darkhast* were second and third rate’.¹⁰⁰

In the post-famine period, the small peasantry could not extend the cultivation though large tracts of cultivable wastes were available and prices were on the rise from mid-1880s onwards. This was mainly due to the changes in age composition of their families, resulting in an increase in the dependency ratio in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Added to that, these impoverished families consisted mainly of sick members. The conditions of physical deterioration continued for some more time because of the malnourished children that the district had inherited in the post-famine period: ‘a large number of infants in the famine districts at birth showed all the marks of being famine-stricken. Frequently in such cases the mother had no visible signs of starvation, but her previous poor living had the effect of starving the foetus *in utero*’.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the existence of a large number of widowed in these families hampered their chances of upward economic mobility. Thus, the famine coupled with the severe revenue collection policies of the colonial government resulted in a downward mobility of small peasantry.

A decline in the number of labourers and tenants available in the district had adversely affected the landlord class of Brahmins for they were more dependent on agricultural labourers compared to rich peasants (Reddys). The Brahmin cultivators had to keep their partially revenue-free lands out of cultivation. The occupied *inam* lands, which constituted a significant proportion of total occupied area, declined at a faster rate during the period 1872–73–1899–1900 (Table 9). A break-up of cultivable wastes and current fallows held under the *inam* and ryotwari tenures is very suggestive (Table 10). The cultivable wastes declined from 11.8 to 7.25 lakh acres between 1879–80 and 1889–90. The component of *inam* lands, which was larger immediately after the famine, declined, obviously as these were the best lands and were greatly in demand. A break-up of cultivable wastes and current fallows shows that the proportion of *inam* lands in the total cultivable wastes was small in 1885–86, but significantly increased in the late 1880s. On the other hand, the proportion of *inam* lands in the total current fallows ranged between 67 and 87.

⁹⁹ For more details, see Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–33

¹⁰⁰ *Annual Settlement Report of Kurnool, 1881–82*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Report of Sanitary Commissioner*, *op. cit.*, p. 78

Thus, consequent upon a decline in the number of tenants and labourers available in the district, a significant proportion of *inam* lands was thrown out of cultivation despite the fact that these were the best lands in the district.

Table 9

*Occupied Area and Current Fallows Under Inam and Ryotwari Tenures in Kurnool
(1872-73-1899-1900)*

Triennium ending with	Occupied land			Current fallows		
	Govt.	Inam	Total	Govt. (%)	Inam (%)	Total
1874/5	1,219	1,074	2,293	n.a	n.a	n.a
1885/6	1,031	1,013	2,044	17.32	82.68	253
1888/9	1,129	933	2,062	32.09	67.91	146
1891/2	1,155	951	2,106	30.74	69.26	169
1894/5	1,163	935	2,098	46.04	53.96	109
1897/8	1,163	958	2,121	36.67	63.33	171
1899/1900	1,165	943	2,108	41.20	58.80	137

Source: Statistical Returns of the Madras Presidency, for the years shown.

Table 10

Cultivable Wastes (CW) and Current Fallows (CF) in Kurnool District.

Year	CW & CF			CF			CW		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
1879-80	59.44	40.56	1180						
1880-81	61.84	38.16	1095						
1881-82	62.38	37.62	1079						
1882-83	67.13	32.87	974						
1883-84	68.90	31.10	911						
1885-86	69.80	30.20	802	17.74	82.26	227	90.40	9.60	575
1886-87	68.61	31.39	788	28.06	71.94	230	85.32	14.68	558
1887-88	68.79	31.21	774	24.13	75.87	210	85.46	14.54	564
1888-89	64.39	35.01	786	33.41	66.59	221	76.52	23.48	565
1889-90	64.99	35.01	725	15.37	84.63	160	79.02	20.98	565

Source: Same as in Table 9.

A = Government lands; B = *Inam* lands; C = Total in '000 acres.

With an increase in the extent of current fallows on *inam* lands, the land revenue arrears had also increased.¹⁰² Also, revenue remissions on these lands were not given. With a rapid accumulation of arrears, the partially

¹⁰² The revenue arrears on Shrotriem *Jodi* (quit rent) increased from Rs 166 to Rs 17,089 during the period 1875-76 to 1878-79, while those on minor *inams* increased from Rs 15,335 to Rs 166,853 during the same period, Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, op. cit., p. 43.

revenue-free proprietors had to relinquish or sell much of their lands at auction sales, which led to a rapid decline in occupied *inam* land (Table 9). As a result, the quit-rent on minor *inams* declined from Rs.89,362 in 1877-78 to Rs.82,889 in 1880-81, while *jodi* on them had declined from Rs.59,565 to Rs.52,369 during the same period.¹⁰³

Added to that, the availability of cultivable wastes and reduction in the incidence of land revenue on government lands brought down the demand for *inam* lands; thus squeezing the rental incomes of the landlords. The same was observed in 1886: 'one cause of their (Brahmin landlords) poverty is ... the reduction of the assessment on government lands, which affects the rental values of *inams*'.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, they had to alienate most of their land through registered as well as auction sales. Table 11 shows that the share of land sold by *inamdars* was considerably high, around 20 to 30 per cent during the period 1890-91-1912-13. In Markapur, nearly two-thirds of the *inam* lands were sold to either private individuals or to the government. By the turn of the century, the importance of Brahmins as the 'landed aristocracy' was on the wane. It was observed 'land is passing more and more into the hands of the cultivating classes at the expense of the absentee landholdings and the lower castes'.¹⁰⁵

Table 11

Land Transfers by Status of the Alienator.
(Area in acres)

3-year avg. ending with	By wholly or partly revenue free proprietor				By revenue paying proprietor				Total	
	Number		Area		Number		Area		Number	Area
	BOC	BPCG	BOC	BPCG	BOC	BPCG	BOC	BPCG		
1894	167	628	1161	4888	55	1999	344	14433	2848	19665
1897	22	645	197	4527	68	2307	690	15493	3041	20710
1900	43	496	428	4142	102	1777	694	13957	2418	18793
1903	54	645	423	5190	154	2318	1285	15132	3171	21606
1906	22	595	197	6022	90	2158	933	14865	2865	21820
1909	5	395	387	3199	52	1901	347	13460	2354	17007
1912	5	506	44	4471	49	1974	261	14925	2533	19657
1913*	2	461	32	3235	5	440	71	3094	2696	19057

Source. *Indian Agricultural Statistics*, for the relevant years.

* One year figure

BOC = By order of a court. BPCG = By private contract or gift

¹⁰³ Appendix 2 in D. Rajasekhar, *Famines and Peasant Mobility*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Chetty, *Kurnool District Manual*, *op. cit.*, p. 186

¹⁰⁵ *Season and Crop Report of Madras Presidency, 1911-12*, p. 1.

The lands alienated by the small peasantry and landlord class were acquired by the rich Reddy peasants. Since the loss of population among the Reddys was low, they were not severely affected by the changes in the age composition of population. Unlike Brahmins, Reddy men and women used to work on the lands and consequently, the decline in the number of agricultural labourers did not affect them. They also participated in trading activities even during the famine period.¹⁰⁶ So, when the lands were sold at extremely low rates in the post-famine period, they were able to acquire them. Moreover, the fertile lands, which were relinquished in the post-famine period were also occupied by them as they were dominant both politically and economically. Hence, their chances of upward mobility had enhanced.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper argues that the impact of the famine of 1876-78 was neither random nor even on various sections of the peasantry in Kurnool district of Andhra. A failure of exchange entitlements during the period of famine resulted in a sharp increase in the mortality rate, which was, however, uneven across the socioeconomic, sex and age groups. The population loss was the highest among the lower castes of Madigas, Boyas and Chenchus. Among the sexes, the males perished more as they out-migrated in search of employment and food. They also came into contact with epidemic diseases, widely prevalent at the relief camps. The mortality rate of females and older people, who were left behind in the protected environment of villages, rose at a slower rate. The mortality rate of children, especially of males, was the highest in the district. Added to that, the birth rate, which declined during the famine period due to demographic, social, medical and sanitary reasons, rapidly increased after the famine.

The lower birth rate, higher mortality rates of males and children, lower mortality rates of females and older people, and a faster increase in birth rate in the post-famine period brought about striking changes in the age and sex composition of the population in the district. Consequently, the dependency ratio (the number of dependents per male in the age group of 15-60) increased in the 1880s and in the 1890s. Moreover, a substantial loss of population in the age group of 15-60 resulted in a large number of widowed. Thus, there was a change in the age and sex composition of families, especially of small peasants belonging to the depressed castes as they were the chief victims of the famine.

Such a change in the age and sex composition of the families of small peasants and also a disruption in their family life resulted in their slow recovery from the famine. Although many small peasants either sold or

¹⁰⁶ *PBR*, No 551, December 17, 1900, p 51.

relinquished much of their cultivated area during and after the famine period, they could not bring the cultivable wastes under the plough. Thus, the slow agrarian expansion in the district during the post-famine period is to be attributed not to the decline in population *per se* but to changes in the age and sex composition of families of poor and small peasants, the disruption of their family life and the consequent general decline in the quality of their labour.

On the whole, the poor and small peasants experienced downward economic mobility. The colonial policies of land revenue collections also contributed to this process. The ability of rich peasants to cope with the problems posed by the famine was distinctly better than that of the small peasants. Hence, the former benefited from the economic deterioration of the latter both during and after the famine. The landlord class of Brahmins also experienced downward economic mobility as it was affected by the reduced supply of tenants and labourers. Thus, a polarisation of the peasantry seems to be the predominant tendency during this period.

Growth and decay of a Kanphata Yogi monastery in south-west Nepal

Véronique Bouillier

Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud
Paris

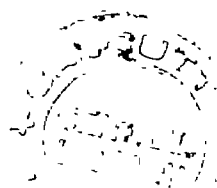
Introduction

There is an abundant ethnohistorical and sociological literature about the temple—mainly the south Indian temple—and about the relationship between the king and the temple, its deities and priests, 'as linked together in a triangle of indirect exchange relationships'.¹ The case I will study here is, in a way, similar: it involves a royal dynasty—the Nepalese Gorkha Kings—and a religious institution—a sectarian Saivite monastery. But there is a major difference: the monastery and the distributive system involved are not organised around the figure of a god whose priests act as intermediaries, but around a charismatic figure, a sectarian leader who combines two parts, the priest's and the god's.

This sectarian dimension implies a more direct and reciprocal relation: kings and sectarian leaders collaborate in a process of mutual legitimation. 'They share authority in a symbiotic, rather than in a mutually exclusive fashion'.² And the case presented here will show how this collaboration worked, based on a set of exchanges: kings gave material endowments as

¹ C. Fuller, 'The King, the Law and the Priests in a South Indian Temple', in *L'espace du Temple*, ed. J.C. Galey, I, 1985 (coll. *Purusartha*, n°8), p. 163. See also, and among others, B. Stein, ed., *South Indian Temples: An Analytical Study*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978 (first published in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 14, 1, 1977). Specially in this volume, A. Appadurai, 'Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350–1700 AD', pp. 47–74, and C. Appadurai Breckenridge, 'From Protector to Litigant. Changing Relations between Hindu Temples and the Raja of Ramnad', pp. 75–106. C. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: the Priests of a South Indian Temple*, Cambridge University Press, 1984, and 'Royal Divinity and Human Kingship in the Festivals of a South Indian Temple', *South Asian Social Scientist*, I, pp. 3–43. M.L. Reiniche, *Tiruvannamalai*, Vol 4: La Configuration Sociologique du Temple Hindou, Paris, Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1989.

² A. Appadurai, 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 73.



well as honorific functions, ascetic leaders gave their blessing but also more worldly support. As says A. Appadurai³—and the Nepalese case confirms it—the sectarian leaders ‘were crucial intermediaries for the introduction, extension and institutionalization of warrior-control over constituencies and regions that might otherwise have proved refractory’:

The founder of the monastery studied here is a Kanphata Yogi. Many Siddhas of this Saivite tantric sect are central characters in the legendary accounts of the formation of the small medieval kingdoms of western Nepal. They collaborate with the new king who is victorious thanks to their magical support.⁴ Gorakhnath himself, the saint founder of the Kanphata Yogis’ sect, is a patron deity of the kings of the small principality of Gorkha; by his favour, the Gorkha king, Prithvi Narayan, succeeded in his undertaking of conquest and unification of the whole of Nepal (achieved by his successors at the end of the eighteenth century). But in addition to the protection of Gorakhnath, Prithvi Narayan benefited by the more worldly help given by a living Yogi, the Siddha Bhagavantanath. This ‘help’ will took various forms and Prithvi Narayan repaid it by various rewards. The foundation of a monastery is part of this logic.

This Yogi monastery is situated in the south-western part of Nepal, in the Dang Valley of Inner Terai, at the foot of the Mahabharat lekh, in the small village of Srigau. Hidden behind a low wall, among banana trees and bamboo groves, which have taken the place of the former jungle, a group of small temples and graves seem to date back to a remote past. Two main buildings opposite each other have been made in the classical Mughal style: a square room surmounted by a stone dome. An inscription dates the first from 1847 VS (1790). Inside, one sees *sivalingas* and two recent (2012 VS) statues of the Siddha Gorakhnath, the founder of the Nath or Kanphata Yogi sect, and of his disciple Bhagavantanath. There are also a small pagoda-styled temple of Bhairav and one of Bhagavati. A few *samadhi*, the graves of the deceased Yogis, surround the temples. Outside the wall, a big brick house is nowadays the *pujari*’s; near to it, a low building houses the fire place, the *dhuni* of Gorakhnath. This quiet and half-deserted place is what remains of an important and wealthy monastery founded two centuries ago by this Bhagavantanath whose tomb is the main sanctum.

This monastery developed thanks to royal protection and favour. Its decay shows us the evolution of the relationship between political and religious powers.

My purpose here is thus to give an account of the history of this monastic institution since its leader’s actions, then to recount its development and

³ A. Appadurai, 1977, *op cit.*, p. 55.

⁴ See V. Bouillier, ‘Prêtres du Pouvoir: les Yogis et la Fonction Royale’, in *La prêtrise en Himalaya: Pouvoirs et Autorité*, V. Bouillier and G. Toffin, eds., Paris, Ed. de l’EHESS, 1989 (coll. *Purusartha*, n°12), pp. 193–213.

changes until the actual state of decay. The main source of information being the inscriptions and donation acts, the history will be oriented according to the relationships with the royal power which constantly interferes, as a donor and as a protector. Over time, a change will appear in its attitude towards the monastery and its leaders, which reflects internal changes in the Nepalese political situation.

The main stages of the evolution of this monastic institution are the following:

- 1) Appearance of a saintly, charismatic figure famous for his miracles or wondrous deeds. His holiness is acknowledged by a local authority who gives him land grants and with whom he cooperates.
- 2) He founds a monastery, recruits disciples, teaches. His disciples develop the monastery and establish the cult of their founder, centred here around his tomb.
- 3) Expansion; foundation of subsidiary monasteries and temples; local autonomy; wealth.
- 4) Conflicts around inheritance or transmission of privileges. Action of the State. Laïcisation of the chiefs of monasteries.
- 5) Annexation by the State. Loss of influence, disappearance of the cult.

This division in five stages is a reconstruction which became clear to me after working on the documents and on their historical context, but this sequence seems to me characteristic of many monasteries' evolution.

My sources are of three kinds:

- 1) Ethnographic observation based upon the study of the remaining buildings, interviews with the actual *pujari* and his family and a general knowledge of the Kanphata Yogis' situation in the area.
- 2) Historical documents whose historiographical legitimacy is unquestionable: the inscriptions found in the monasteries, and the requests, edicts and letters exchanged between the kings and the heads, and published by the Nepalese historian, Narharinath Yogi, in his huge volume about 'treaties and documents' (*Itihas prakasna sandhi patra samgraha*). The documents are presented and accumulated, without any particular order or regard for historical coherence. Simply, as Narharinath is himself a famous Yogi, he had interest in and access to many archives of the various Nath monasteries.
- 3) A third source is less impartial: local *vamsavalis* (one written by a former head of the monastery and one by Narharinath) give us a selection of what is considered as important and meaningful for the actors. It is 'an

ideologically-charged version of the past'⁵ which gives us historical data but also insights into the values shared by the community. In this case, the monastery's chronicle is clearly written in order to deplore the present state of decay and to contrast the present government's attitude with the past kings' patronage, and thus it is an attempt to recover a prestigious past.

The Founder

The Siddha Bhagavantanath⁶ appears on the Nepalese scene in 1763 in the western kingdom of Salyan. As in all Nath legends concerning mysterious protective Yogis, he comes from nowhere and makes himself recognised by some miracle—in this case ubiquity. But after this wondrous appearance related only in the *vamsavalis*, our data allow us to follow his career into the political turmoil of this end of the eighteenth century.

In 1763, Nepal was still divided into many small kingdoms,⁷ the central part—the Kathmandu Valley—being ruled by the Newar Malla kings. But from the western kingdom of Gorkha, the King Prithvi Narayan Sah is slowly progressing in his ambitions of conquest. His aim is the conquest of the Valley and his strategy combines military pressures (blockade of the Valley) and Machiavellian⁸ tactics of alliances quickly reversed, gifts and intrigues. When Bhagavantanath appears, Prithvi Narayan is on the verge of conquering the Valley but he is still stopped at the entrance of Kirtipur. Moreover, he can still be threatened by a coalition of the '24' western kingdoms, the Caubisi. On these two sides, the Yogi will give him decisive support.

The Yogi and the two kings

The king of the small south-western kingdom of Salyan, Krishna Sah, is very

⁵ A. Appadurai, 'The past as a scarce resource', *Man*, 16, 1981, pp. 201–219.

⁶ For a more detailed description of Bhagavantanath's figure, see G. Unbescheid, 'Kaphata. Untersuchungen zu Kult, Mythologie und Geschichte Sivaitischer Tantriker in Nepal', Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980. V. Bouillier, 'The King and his Yogi: Bhagavantanath, Prithvi Narayan Sah and Nepal's Unification in the 18th century', in 'Gender, Caste and Power in South Asia. Social Status and Mobility in Transitional Societies', J.P. Neelsen, ed., Delhi, Manohar Publishers (in press).

⁷ A perfect illustration of what B. Stein (in *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 47) calls 'Kshatriya raj' prevalent in northern India, with a warrior elite whose authority was maintained through extensive agnatic and affinal relationships and whose primary function was that of ruling a small territory, a domain which at times could be expanded by warfare into a large realm under able military leadership or could be reduced by succumbing to the expanding overlordship of some other royal lineage.

⁸ Or Kautilya's as the *Arthashastra* (VII, 68) recognises four *upayas* (ways) for the king to protect and enlarge his territory: *sama*, conciliation; *bheda*, capacity to arise dissension; *danda*, military force and *dana*, gift.

anxious about the enterprise of Prithvi Narayan. According to the *vamsavali*, his request to the miraculous Yogi meditating near his palace, is 'to save his kingdom from the very active king of Gorkha'.⁹ And the Yogi, after a moral talk on the virtues of a king, promises his help.

He goes to Gorkha. And, according to the *vamsavali*, he settles in the eponymous cave of Gorakhnath, where the Siddha meditated and from where he gave his protection to the Gorkha kingdom. Prithvi Narayan, 'hearing of the arrival of a Yogi resembling Siva, went immediately to the Gorakhdhuni and greeted the Yogi, seeing in him the exact image of Gorakhnath himself. And he told him all his troubles' (*Yogi Vam* 86).

From this time on, Bhagavantanath begins to collaborate actively with Prithvi Narayan in such a way that he is able to keep the promise of help he made to the two kings. He joins them together and guarantees the future of the Sallyan king by arranging the marriage of the crown prince of Sallyan, Ranabhim Sah, with Prithvi Narayan's daughter.

Then he joins the army of the Gorkha king and plays an essential part in the conquest of Kirtipur. According to his hagiography, he uses his mystical power to gain the support of the Kirtipur tutelary god, Bhairav. And the town, thus abandoned, surrenders. We do not have any historical document on the exact part played by Bhagavantanath in this episode, but we can be sure of its importance, as he was sumptuously rewarded by the king. His ascension to pre-eminence will be the consequence of this Kirtipur episode.

Letters exchanged between Prithvi Narayan and the guru testify to the growing influence of Bhagavantanath. He manages alliances with western kingdoms, sends emissaries and spies, and even gives advice to the king on military campaigns.¹⁰ After having conquered the eastern Kirat territory, Prithvi Narayan sends a turban (*pagari*) to Bhagavantanath, as a token of respect (*Yogi Vam* 86).

Rewards

As an advisor to the two kings, Bhagavantanath gets rewards from both sides. But they are different. From the Sallyan king, he gets land; from Prithvi Narayan, honorific functions. We do not have any document on the date of the first monastic settlement of Bhagavantanath in Sallyan, in a place called Ranagau. We just know that, in 1768, he owned it already as he placed here the trophies he had received after the victory of Kirtipur. In 1780, Krsna Sah gives him a piece of land in the newly conquered territory of Dang in

⁹ Narharinath, *Yogi Vamsavali*, Kasi, Goraksa Granthmala 87 (w.d.), p. 86 Henceforth, *Yogi Vam*

¹⁰ Cf. D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta, K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1975, Vol.1, pp 231-232 and 236-237, and *Yogi Vam*, p. 83.

Inner Terai, in Srigau.¹¹ On a copper plate in Srigau, one can read: 'the king was married and Dang was conquered and given as a dowry.¹² The king, satisfied, gave to Bhagavantanath a village in Dang.... This land received the name of Srigau. Bhagavantanath remained there until his death' (IPS 414). On other documents, the king assures him of his and his descendants' protection.

From Prithvi Narayan, Bhagavantanath receives honours and high status. After the victory over Kirtipur, he obtains the trophies of the defeated king: his banner, sceptre, fly-whisk and drum, plus the king's slaves and even his daughter! (IPS 454 and 466). Treated like a victorious king,¹³ Bhagavantanath becomes the leader of the Nath community. By an edict in 1770, he is made '*mahamandali*';¹⁴ this office gives him the right to levy a special tax on certain castes or tribes and gives him judicial authority on the Yogis and the right to keep some judiciary revenues for himself ('the fines for illicit

¹¹ Narharinath, *Itihas Prakasma Sandhipatra Samgraha*, Varanasi, Kalpana Press, 2022 VS, p. 459. Henceforth, IPS. I disagree here with R. Burghart (in 'Gifts to the gods: power, property and ceremonial in Nepal', in D. Cannadine, and S. Price, eds., *Rituals of Royalty Power and ceremonial in traditional societies*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 237–70). According to him, 'Hindu ascetics, unlike the celestial gods and Brahmins, do not appear to have been gifted land' (p. 255) and 'ascetics appear not to have received gifts of land in their own name' (p. 256). But in the case of Bhagavantanath, we have several examples of direct gifts of land; the verbs used are *dinu* (for instance see the order from king Girvan Juddha Sah in 1867 VS renewing the land grant made by the Sallyan kings; *Bhagavantanathlai Sallyanirajaharule guth birta diyako gau keth* etc. IPS 460) or *baksanu* (honorific for the giver: cf. IPS 459 for the land given by Krsna Sah), or *Carhamu* (honorific for the receiver: cf. IPS 460: *Daragauko gau gosaijyulai carhaya ko cha*). The eventual objection of Bhagavantanath being considered as a god is not valid since his successors also received land grants (cf. IPS 460 which refers to the Sisava village given—*diyako*—to Bhuvanesvarnath).

¹² Dang was given as dowry by Prithvi Narayan to his daughter Vilas Kumari. This territory was thus destined to be united with the Sallyan kingdom. But surprisingly, at the time of the marriage, Dang Valley was far from being conquered. Prithvi Narayan's armies had not yet reached this part of Nepal. The annexation happened only in 1786 (according to D.R. Regmi, *op.cit.*, p. 325). But this was common practice for the kings to promise land grants on territories still alien.

¹³ Appadurai, 1977, *op.cit.*, p. 62 describes how, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, 'the Telugu warriors' used the same technique: they 'linked themselves to the temple as a source of honor, through the patronage of sectarian leaders and the re-allocation of land and cash to these sectarian figures. At the same time, they associated these sectarian leaders with their own kingship by investing them with royal honors'.

¹⁴ This office was not specific to the Nath. Documents show that leaders of other ascetic communities were invested with the same authority (as well as representatives of castes): For the Vaishnavite sect, it was the '*manmahant*' (the first datable document is from 1877, according to R. Burghart, 'Regional Circles and the Central Overseer of the Vaishnavite Sects in the Kingdom of Nepal', in '*Changing South Asia: Religion and Society*', K. Ballhatch and D. Taylor, eds., London 1984, pp. 164–178), for the Sanyasis, it was a *mandalai* (letter of 1865 V.S. in Narharinath Yogi, *Itihas Prakasa*, 2013 V.S., 2,2, pp. 20–21). For the Muslims, the document giving authority, *sardarri*, to one *fakir* Ghasi, is from 1738 AD (M. Gaborieau, *Minorities Musulmanes dans le Royaume Hindou du Nepal*, Nanterre, Laboratoire d'Ethnologie, 1977, p. 36).

sexual relations, other fines and properties of the Yogis who died childless', IPS 459).

The collaboration between Bhagavantanath and Prithvi Narayan is beneficial to both. It works as a twofold process of mutual legitimation: the king contributes in establishing the Yogi's reputation and to support his authority through gifts of honours and land grants (made by Krishna Sah, but on territories given by the king of Nepal). Without the favour of Prithvi Narayan, Bhagavantanath would have been ignored (history keeps traces of his worldly achievements much more than his ascetic exploits). But, by glorifying and worshipping the Yogi, the king places himself in the position of someone blessed by the gods, and specially by Gorakhnath. Thanks to the Siddha's protection, his conquest is successful and thus his rule *dharmaic*.

The Monastic Foundation

The monastic complex established by Bhagavantanath constitutes itself around three poles: the landed properties, the continuity of ritual performances and the transmission of authority.

We have seen that after his first settlement in Ranagau, Bhagavantanath received land in the Dang Valley (60 *bijmuri*, i.e., land whose sowing needs 60 *muri*). In this jungle inhabited by Tharu tribals, he created his second monastery. If the Ranagau place is now deserted, Srigau is still important.

In addition to these two land grants, Bhagavantanath received the land rights on three other places: one village in Dadagau, given as *guthi* by the king of Chilli,¹⁵ the village of Sisava given as *birta*¹⁶ by the king of Sallyan (IPS 460) and three villages in Bahraich given as *birta* by the Nawab of Awadh¹⁷ (*Yogi Vam* 87).

These lands were given to the monastery in the name of Bhagavantanath. On the donation act it was specified that, in exchange, the monastery had to maintain the Yogis, to feed the pilgrims, and to ensure permanence

¹⁵ The land was registered as *guthi* (*guthi caraya*, *Yogi Vamsavali*, p. 81). Chilli was one of the small kingdoms inside Dang Valley. We know very little about it: its name is mentioned in few inscriptions, some ruins in Bijauri may come from an ancient fortress, and a cult to Ratanath with Kanphata Yogis as *pujaris* may attest a former palatial cult. (On Chilli, see M.C. Regmi Regmi, *Research Series*, 1989, 21, n°12, p. 172; G. Krauskopff, *Maîtres et Possédés. Les Rites et l'Ordre Social chez les Tharu*, Paris, Ed. du CNRS, 1989, pp. 42-43).

¹⁶ An inscription of Ranabhim Sah from 1854 V.S. (1797) confirms the 'grant as *birta* of a village Sisava given in alms (*bhik diyako*) to Bhuvanesvarnath' (IPS 460).

¹⁷ The Nawabs of Awadh (and among them Shuja-ud-Daulah, 1754-1775) were known to have had a very liberal attitude towards Hindus. They employed many Hindus in the State administration and, in Shuja's army, two of the most powerful generals were Naga *Sanyasis*, ascetics of the Saiva Dasnami sect. And the Nawab used to reward them with generous *jagirs* (See R.B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires. Awadh, the Mughals and the British, 1720-1801*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, pp. 28-29, 56). We can thus suppose that he had contacts, probably diplomatic, with Bhagavantanath as Prithvi Narayan's envoy.

of the cult (cf. for instance IPS, p.462, letters from 1894, 1900 and 1904 VS). This cult was centered around Siva and the main Nath deities but it had two particularities. One was the worship of the guru; when Bhagavantath died, he was buried like all the ascetics and his grave became the centre of the monastic compound and the main place for the daily ritual.¹⁸ The identification between the monastery and the grave was so crucial that we have two graves, in the two monasteries of Ranagau and Srigau. The second characteristic was the importance of Dasai (Durgapuja). In this celebration, for the king and the prosperity of the kingdom, the Yogis officiated as palace priests and supported the legitimacy of kingship, as did their local founder Bhagavantath. In this circumstance, the two places of Ranagau and Srigau united. Till recently, the head of Srigau climbed up to Ranagau a few days before the beginning of the festival. Two tridents were taken out of the temple and stuck in the ground. They represented Bhairav and Bhagavati and they received the sacrifices of the eighth and ninth days. During these ten days, the old trophies of the king of Kirtipur were also displayed and the procession was welcomed by the beating of the *agavani nagara* drum from Kirtipur (IPS 620). This duplication between two sanctuaries as between two palaces, was a common feature in the former kingdoms in Terai. Winter palaces and sanctuaries were in the plains and summer ones on the surrounding hills, far from malaria. The key moments of shifting were around the two Dasai festivals, in autumn and spring. Nowadays, with the abolition of the fictional Sallyan kingdom in 1961 and the eradication of malaria, the Ranagau monastery is closed. There is not even a *puja* in Dasai as the people in Srigau have to pay for the sacrifices and, as we will see, their resources are dwindling. And the old trophies of Prithvi Narayan's hardest victory are dust ridden.

These lands were given as *guthi*, religious endowments, or *birta*, free tax allotments, to Bhagavantath as the head of the monastery (*mahant*). As it was specified on one of the Krishna Sah donations: 'the king's descendants have no right to expropriate, Bhagavantath Gosaiju's descendants have no right to sell' (IPS 459). The government and its tax collectors do not interfere, and all the taxes paid by the tenants have to be given to the monastery. Nevertheless many conflicts will arise in this taxation.

The main problem is to ensure the transmission. The grants and the office as the one of *mandali* have always to be confirmed, at every succession on the king's or *mahant's* side. It is usual that the new king confirms, by a royal edict (*lalmohor*), the donations and privileges given by his predecessor (and especially after political change); we can thus follow the historical vicissitudes of the Sallyan kingdom by looking at the signatures of the letters

¹⁸ This sort of monastic and pilgrimage complex centred around a tomb, reminds us of the Muslim cult of saints, and gives evidence of the contact and influence between Yogis and Sufis (Cf S A A Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978, t 1, chap 6), which is also important in the Dang Caughera Yogi monastery

concerning the monastery.¹⁹ On the other hand, the new *mahant*, usually the closest disciple of the former one, has to be confirmed in his office, and the monastery in its properties by the king.

Let us take, for instance, the first succession and the most crucial one for the permanency of the monastery, the succession to Bhagavantanath. He dies in 1786 (1843 VS) and his disciple, Bhuvanesvarnath, sends many letters to the actual king, Rana Bahadur Sah, asking for acknowledgment. And we have a reply dated 1786 (1844 VS) saying: 'we received your letter... Yesterday we received your benediction, today also you gave it to us.... You said that the edict on the *mandalai* has not been done, we gave it to Hardamanath.... You asked if all the lands previously linked with the throne (*jagga gadilai thamiyako*) are maintained or given to other people, we answer that we keep them under your name (*Srigosaijyuko namma diyako*)' (IPS 459).

Finally, certain of royal support, Bhuvanesvarnath builds his *guru's* samadhi in 1790 (1847 VS) in Srigau and organises the community. We know that the relationships between the Yogis were not without conflict. One Prithvi Nath complained to the king, who writes to Bhuvanesvarnath in 1795: 'You rejected Prithvi Nath and it hurts him, he complained to us. All the disciples shall be supported thanks to the revenues and properties of the monastery. He is not to suffer, keep him with you and give him food for his life' (IPS 460).

¹⁹ Since 1793, Krishna Sah's son, Ranabhim Sah (who was also Prithvi Narayan's son-in law) reigned in on Sallyan with full autonomy, the Yogis refer to him exclusively, and he is the one who writes to the governor of Dang Pachilla parganna in 1805, to confirm the rights and properties of Srigau (IPS 460). But his reign was short. In 1809, a conflict arises between Ranabhim and the Nepal Government. The situation in Kathmandu is very confused: the former king, Rana Bahadur Sah, has been murdered in 1806. His son continues to rule—but this time really—after the troubled years when his father was regent. Now the regent is the queen, Tripura Sundari, and the chief minister Bhimsen Thapa. According to Hamilton, Vilas Kumari, the queen of Sallyan, goes to Kathmandu to accuse Bhimsen Thapa of having murdered her nephew, the former king. She will be thrown out of her kingdom and required to reside in a small town in Sallyan, Phalabang.

But these events happened three years after Rana Bahadur's death. New documents give other prospects; they show the quick and violent eviction of the Sallyan king, accused of plotting against Nepal. Looking at the letters (T. Manandhar in 'Raja Ranabhim Shah of Sallyan', *Regmi Research Series*, 18,7, 1986, pp. 102–109), the pretext seems very slight: a Sallyan officer went to see a Nepal enemy, Bhawan Shahi. Ranabhim acknowledged the fact and is consequently deprived of his throne. In fifteen days, in Baisakh 1866 VS (1809), four military companies are sent to arrest him and to bring him to Kathmandu (where we do not know what happened). The Nepal king, Girvan Juddha Sah, sent to the head officers and citizens of Sallyan the official notification of the king's eviction, and the order to obey henceforth the Nepal Government. From 1809 to 1818, the Sallyan administration is carried on by the Subba Rudravira Sahi. As it is necessary to enforce these new regulations, the Subba, in the name of the king of Nepal, issues an edict to confirm the *guthi* and *birta* land grants made by the Sallyan king to the monastery, and to forbid anybody to harm Bhagavantanath's successors (in 1810: IPS 460).

Bhuvanesvarnath's authority will not be contested any more, and his *mahantship* will last almost thirty years, till his 'journey to Kasi' (*Kasibasanne*), a metaphor for death.

Expansion

The monastic institution is firmly established, its permanence has been secured by a first succession in the head office. The next period is characterised by an extension of the properties and of the influence of the monastery and by the complete support of the State which always defends the *math* interest.

The Properties

It is probably with Rupanath, the second successor of Bhagavantnath, that the monastery estate is the most extensive. We know this (at least partially) from a few royal edicts ratifying the previous donations. As usual, they were made after a successorial change: the king Rajendra ascended to the Nepal throne in 1816 (1873 VS) and Rupanath to the monastery one, probably around the same period. Three edicts made in 1820 and 1821 confirm what was previously given by the Salyan king (who had been thrown out of his kingdom in 1809). Details on the lands are given: their more or less precise location, their surface in *bijmuri* or *muri*. Thus, the whole estate of the monastery enlarges upon approximately 200 *bijmuri*, i.e., 16 tons of seeds (which, for the Terai, amounts to 8,000 *ropāni* or 400 hectares) mainly in Dang.

In addition to these *guthi* lands given by kings, the monastery acquires new properties. We know of two of these transactions by the registration acts. The first concerns the lands of Nathu Upadhyā in Cakhaura Dang *pachilla* bought for 200 rupees (IPS 461). The second one is more important: Rupanath buys, for the monastery, land worth 3,201 rupees and belonging to four *gurupanditraj*; these pieces of land (fields or building-plots) are divided into nine plots in various locations. Curiously, this purchase made in 1830 (1887 VS), will be registered only 40 years later (IPS 462). These lands are *birta*, given by the king to influential persons or groups (often to his own family); *birtas* are at variance, most of them are inheritable and tax-free, but usually not transferable.²⁰

The wealth of the *math* is such that, as early as 1844 VS, it lent money to the king.²¹ This fact is briefly mentioned in the first letter of reconfirmation to Bhuvanesvarnath: 'You asked if all the lands previously linked with the

²⁰ See M.C. Regmi, *Landownership in Nepal*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, chap. 3.

²¹ It is worth noticing the part played by ascetics and monasteries as bankers, thanks to their wealth, their capacity to accumulate capital and the protection given by their military

throne are maintained or given to other people; we answer that we keep them under your name....' (according to what follows he is obliged to!) 'We borrowed a thousand rupees from you; we will repay after Dasai' (IPS 459).

It is easy at this time to expand the *math* territory as the Dang area is still wild, a jungle inhabited only by small itinerant groups of slash and burn Tharu cultivators. The Nepalese government policy (from Bhimsen Thapa to the Rana ministers) will be to put these lands under cultivation and to promote sedentarisation²² and settlement of new migrants. And, in this aspect, the part played by the monastery is important.²³ Thus the State grants new plots very easily to the monastery in 1837 (1894 VS): 'you have written that a landslide due to a flood destroyed your *guthi birta* granted before, and thus you cannot perform the *puja* (*dhupbatti*, incense and lamps) any more, nor distribute food. Thus, excepted what has been already allotted, put into cultivation this waste land of 1 1/4 *muri* (in Vikayama) and 50 *muri* (in Baklya), put fences, dams, ditches, perform the *puja*, dispense food and bless the government' (IPS 462).

The enlargement of the estate allows the successor of Rupanath, Lokhnath, to add to the building. He accedes the *gadi*, the throne, somewhere between 1887 VS (the last letter we have in the name of Rupanath) and 1894 VS (the first in his name). According to the Yogi Vamsavali, he is responsible for new buildings near Bhagavantnath's grave.

The details of the construction are given on a copper-plate, stored in Srigau: 'Lokhnath sent for the best craftsmen from everywhere, all came, they asked: 'what do you order?' In VS 1899, Sake 1764, on a *cait* Sunday in the Aries constellation, he gave an order to build a throne and a palace. As the palace was finished, the astrologer looked at the calendar;

sections. The Gosains, i.e., the Dasnami Sannyasis, were among the wealthier traders and money-lenders in India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (B. Cohn, 'The Role of the Gosains in the Economy of eighteenth and nineteenth century Upper India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 1,4,1964, pp 174-182. They also had trading places in the Kathmandu Valley and were important during the war between Prithvi Narayan and the Newar kings, as they lent money to both sides (D.R. Regmi, 1975, *op.cit* t.I, pp 117, 119, 201)

²² The central government will rely upon local Tharu chiefs, called Chaudhars. 'In 1875, for instance, Prime Minister Jung Bahadur granted waste lands amounting to one hundred bighas to each chaudhari of the Dang-Deokhuri region in appreciation of the services rendered by them in constructing fords, tracks and irrigation channels and promoting land reclamation and settlement' (mentioned in M.C.Regmi, *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces*, Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978, p 51)

²³ Cf A. Appadurai (1977, *op.cit.*, p. 49) for South Indian examples of 'temple endowment as a technique for the extension of royal control into new arenas'. Of course, as R. Burghart says for eastern Terai land (1984, *op.cit.*, p. 168), forest land was of little economic value, and 'by converting uncultivated land into *kusa birta* land, the king was able to gain the blessing of the ascetics in the defence of the realm at no appreciable loss to the Exchequer' (*Ibid.*, p 169), but it was also part of a strategy, making the monastery a centre of development and social control in a remote and non-Hinduised part of the kingdom.

baisakh mahastami, a Monday, was the auspicious day. The astrologer saw that this Monday would be auspicious for the inauguration. Dang and Sallyan Brahmans were summoned to read the texts and make the rituals; invocations (*jap*) were said, gifts and benedictions were given and the craftsmen were well paid.... Babaji Lokhnath entered into the building while the drums were beaten.' According to the Yogi Vamsavali (which differs from the previous inscription), Lokhnath is supposed to have left Srigau for Ranagau 'where he established the custom to make the Dasai *puja* for Devi, Bhairav and Navadurga with the royal paraphernalia of the Kirtipur Raja'.

During this phase of prosperity, the political authority always sides with the monastery in the local conflicts which generally have to do with land and taxation. We have a few letters from Jang Bahadur Rana²⁴ to Jagadisvarnath (who succeeded Lokhnath) or to the Dang Sallyan region governors; they are similar to this one of 1849 (1906 VS): 'the math properties have been made tax free, and the mahant Jagadisvarnath writes to us that you give trouble to him with *mamarakha* forced labour and he asks to re-establish everything according to the previous edicts and to abolish forced labour.... We do that' (IPS 463). Another letter gives the list of the houses of craftsmen working for the monastery who are not to be submitted to forced labour (IPS 463-4).

Another conflict on land and taxation is the subject of the following letter from King Rana Uddip to the *kaji* (governor) Chandra Bir Bhandari and concerning a charge laid by Jagadisvarnath in 1857 (1914 VS). Jagadisvarnath has written: 'the King Krishna Sah had granted to our ancestor Bhagavantnath all income from the Lagadamar Land in Khadkakat (including the elephants and iron-mine taxes but excluding *jotpot*). The Gorkha government confirmed and till 1912 we used to make the *puja* thanks to this income. But in 1913, the *mukhya* (village headman), Pokhrya Raut, from the Bajbisaunu village claimed that they were his, took the taxes from the farmers and let the people use the forest. Although Krishna Sah gave us all that with his seal and we benefited by, the incomes for the *puja* have thus stopped, how can we perpetuate the cult according to the custom? This obstacle should not be. Jagadisvarnath's claim has been written by Kusyal Kavar and sent to us. Bring together the *mukhya* and the *math* people and investigate if the charge is sound. This Pokhrya who usurped the *math* income must be thrown out and must confess his deed in writing' (IPS 464).

Thus, even before investigation, the king supports the *math* claim on land taxes. But the main problem that will arise in the coming decades and

²⁴ In 1846, Jang Bahadur Rana became Prime Minister, following a kind of *coup d'état*. During one century, his family will rule the country as ministers and commanders-in-chief, the king being a mere puppet.

contribute to the ruin of the monastery is the question of the *mandalai*, the privileges and authority given to Bhagavantanth over the Yogi sect.

In 1873 (1930 VS), a letter from Rana Uddip to Jagadisvarnath on this topic begins with the mention—which will also appear in all the following letters—of the benediction given by Bhagavantanth to Prithvi Narayan, of his support in the Kirtipur affair, and in exchange of the grant of the *mandalai*. Then the Minister goes on, repeating the words of the complaint: ‘the *mandalai* has been in use since 1837 VS but it was abolished in 1909.²⁵ Thus we cannot provide for the Yogis any more nor repair the temple. This is what you [Jagadisvarnath] said to us when we were travelling on the Gurujum Khola. “If you [the Prime Minister] bring into force the *mandalai* again... we could feed the Yogis, repair the temple and keep what remains, for our maintenance”, that is what you said to us. Thus my order is that the income from the fines for offences committed in the Yogi *jat* as well as the properties of Yogis who died childless, that the tax officers and the holders of Jagir land do not take them but that they shall be paid to the *mahant*’ (IPS 465).

This absolute support given by the king to the monastery claims is the last one. After that the monasteries of Bhagavantanth, Srigau and Ranagau, enter into a phase of decline.

Decline Of Influence

There are a few reasons for this loss of importance:

First, the new *mahant*’s personality. He is involved in conflicts in which his behaviour does not correspond to the image of a *mahant*.

Then the trend to hegemony, the *ubris* of the monastery who wants to extend its privileges (and especially the *mandalai*) beyond what was customary.

Probably also the Ranas’ attitude towards this type of religious grant. The Ranas ‘did not constitute a landed aristocracy.... It was their political power that enabled them to acquire land and other economic resources. It was, therefore, a matter of supreme importance for them to establish and maintain a unified and centralised polity’.²⁶ ‘Administration [for them] had two main functions: the collection of revenues and the maintenance of law and order, the latter primarily in order to facilitate the former’.²⁷

²⁵ I did not find any other mention nor reason for this temporary abolition

²⁶ M.C. Regmi, *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces*, op cit, p. 27

²⁷ M.P. Blaikie, J. Cameron and J.D. Seddon, *Nepal in Crisis*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 32 Symptomatic of this new attitude is the ‘complete volte-face’ R. Burghart notices in the function allotted to the ‘Central Overseer’, the *manmahant* of the Vaisnavites.

In spite of this trend towards profit accumulation, the Ranas continue to support some land grants to deities or individuals, in order to justify their own position. But the Naths, and especially Bhagavantānath's heirs, were so related to the Sah dynasty that it would have been useless, for the Ranas, to support institutions aiming at the legitimization of a royal power they wanted to bypass.

Thus Bhagavantānath's *math* loses its privileged position. It is challenged by other institutions, other monasteries, which condemn it before the State. And the State arbitrates conflicts in the sect or even inside the *math* it takes advantage of the occasion to enforce its power.

The first conflict is about the *mandalai*. It involves both Khimanath, the new *mahant* of Srigau, and Lakṣminath, the priest of the Phalabang temple (Phalabang is the new capital of the renewed Sallyan kingdom²⁸). The story, quite complicated, is told in a long letter sent by the commander-in-chief, Dev Samser Rana, to Lakṣminath in 1883 (VS 1940). Like every administrative letter, it gives all the circumstances of the grant of the *mandalai*. The disagreement focuses on two points:

The contestation by the *mahant* of an old privilege (on which I have no document) exempting Phalabang territory from the *mandalai* jurisdiction.

The extension of the implications of the *mandalai*. This *mandalai* gives to his holder, thus Bhagavantānath's successor to *mahantship*, the right to collect the fines for illicit sexual relations. Khimanath, the new *mahant*, wanted to have this right extended to the *patiya*, i.e., the certificate of re-admittance to caste.²⁹

²⁸ Previously the Central Overseer was the office by which the Government ensured that it did not appropriate any income from the land which it had once gifted in alms. From 1886 the Central Overseer became their assurance that the Government would not lose any potential source of revenue from the ascetics with whom it had a tenurial relationship' (1984, *op.cit.*, p. 174). Unfortunately the documents on Srigau do not allow us such a clear demonstration of the Ranas' economic policy regarding the lands of the monastery.

²⁸ The administration of Sallyan is carried on, after 1827, by one Tej Bahadur Sah. We do not know his origin; he is probably from the family of the last king, since he is given the title of 'king of Phalabang', after 1837. But he is not fully autonomous and the monastery's problems are still under care of the Nepal government (See details in *Regmi Research Series* 1974, 6, n°9, pp 161-164). After his death in 1847, his successor is Narendra Bahadur Sah. During this time, in Kathmandu, the Rana ministers ensure their power and use the strategy Pnṭhvi Narayan used with Sallyan marriage alliance. Narendra marries a daughter of Dhir Samser Rana, his brother marries another one. The rule of succession is carefully mentioned in the marriage contract: after Rajendra's death, his successor is his nephew, Samser Bahadur Rana, and the regents, the two Rana queens. Thus, the Phalabang (ex-Sallyan) kingdom is directly ruled from Kathmandu and all the letters and edicts concerning the monastery are signed by the Prime Minister or the commander-in-chief for the Western part.

²⁹ The certificate of re-admittance is traditionally the privilege of the *dharmadhikar*, the state priest specialist on the dharmasastras. But some passages of the code 'clearly suggest that some of the *dharmadhikar*'s duties can be delegated to local officers and even notables' (A. Hofer, *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal*, Innsbruck, Universitätsverlag, 1979, p. 196).

This conflict flared up because of sexual relations between a Yogi widow and a Khatri. Here is the complaint made by the Phalabang *pujari* Lakshminath, as it is repeated in Dev Samsher's letter: 'since the time of the Sallyan king, the *mandalai* is not enforced upon the kingdom of Car Hazar [Four Thousand, a name given to Phalabang] since it is tax free.... Our tradition, since the beginning, is to be directly purified by Ratannath'.³⁰ But 'Jagadisvarnath died and his disciple Khimanath became *mahant*. By showing the *mandalai* made in the name of Jagadisvarnath, he claimed its application inside tax free Car Hazar, and since 1937 VS he has given trouble to guiltless Kanphata and Kavar Jogis. At the same time, in Paiyacaur in Phalanbang kingdom, Dhutu Kavar Jogi's widow, called Bhadri Kaunyani, had sexual relations with Motu Khatri from the same village, and concealing the fact, leads to defilement through rice acceptance'.³¹ It came to be known and the court of the kingdom sentenced Motu Khatri according to the law. But the *mahant* Khimanath claimed that he has to do the certificate of re-admittance, saying—even though it is not part of the *mandalai*—'I will do the certificate for all the Jogis of Car Hazar or I will exclude you from commensality'.

The argument goes on. Finally, the commander-in-chief answers, justifying Lakshminath: 'in the Car Hazar kingdom of our grand-daughter the *maharani*, where the *mandalai* was not enforced, from now on the *mahant* Khimanath is not allowed to enforce it but it will be from our competence. And he must not harm the Jogis of this kingdom. Concerning the illicit sexual relations and the people dying childless, follow the tradition of Ratannath. Concerning the food, follow the code' (IPS 452).

³⁰ The Siddha Ratannath, disciple of Gorakhnath and well-known throughout Northern India (even among Sufis, as Ratan Baba), is the alleged founder of the Dang Caughera Yogi monastery. Thus, I suppose that 'to be purified by Ratannath' means that the authority concerning caste and purity, was also vested on the Caughera monastery. Probably following the abolition of the Sallyan kingdom, Caughera had become a leading religious centre, and his deity, Ratannath had been introduced, as the protecting deity, in the renewed kingdom of Phalabang. Thus behind this conflict between Srigau and Phalabang, one sees a rivalry between the two main sanctuaries and the two Siddhas of the Dang valley: Srigau with Bhagavantnath and Caughera with Ratannath.

³¹ This Yogini had sexual relations with a Khatri, a superior caste. As the Yogis are outside hierarchy, their place is not precisely defined. Nevertheless, the Nepalese code (*Muluki Ain*) 'invents' a special place in the hierarchical scale, for the Sannyasis, Bairagis, Yogis etc. (cf. V. Bouillier, 'L'Ascétisme dans le Code Nepalais', *Journal Asiatique*, n°266, 1978, pp 133-152). In the code, sexual relationships between castes are forbidden, with the penances varying according to their distance and to rice acceptance. In our case, the distance between the two castes is not very great, but the situation is worsened by the sharing of food and the transmission of pollution to others. And the woman, as a widow, was supposed to remain chaste; her 'feme's status', as says A. Hofer (*op.cit.*, p. 73), i.e., her personal status as a woman, suffers consequently a decline, as 'the woman is polluted by every man with whom she indulges in sexual intercourse, irrespective of her male partner's caste and the concomitant circumstances, such as *bhai* acceptance, etc. This is proved by the mere fact that the woman is

Thus the attempt to enforce the *mandalai* in Phalabang was not successful. The premises of the *mandalai* and its successive confirmations stipulate that it has to be enforced on 'all our country' (*hamro muluk bhari*) but Phalabang people claim a status of autonomy, which Dev Samsher implicitly recognises here. Thus it is clear that the enforcement of the *mandalai* is conditioned by the math influence and prestige, and by the correlative attitude of the law courts.

In this year 1883 (1940 VS) another polemic arises and the privileges of Bhagavantnath's heirs will be reduced even more. This time again Khimanath does not appear at his best, but for different reasons.

The conflict is with Hamsanath, the *mahant* of the Mrgasthali monastery in Pasupatinath (Kathmandu Valley). We know the story from another long letter from Rana Uddip to Khimanath in which the prime minister repeats the request of Khimanath for promulgation of a new edict reproducing at his own benefit, the one granted to his *guru* Jagadisvarnath in 1930 VS. 'But', says Rana Uddip, at the same time, 'we received a letter from Hamsanath saying: "Khimanath indulges in debauchery (*randivagi*); don't make the edict in his name but in mine"'.¹

An inquiry was set up. The letter evokes the past edicts and duties on both sides (worship, alms, etc.) and especially of the resolution made in 1899 VS by the Barapanthi (the assembly of the twelve orders, the highest authority among the Kanphatas) upon the attitude concerning women—a very liberal attitude for ascetics—: 'that a Jogi does not keep a woman inside the monastery, that he keeps her in a house built outside the monastery (*Jogile svasni mathma narakhnu moth bahira ghar banai rakhnu*)!' 'This resolution was accepted by Khimanath... but it has been said that Khimanath is keeping a wife and is thus a *gharbari* Jogi' (i.e., a householder Jogi).

Following that, the decisions made by Rana Uddip are logical: from now on the wandering *jogis* (*ramta*) will be subordinate to Hamsanath and his successors, and the householder *jogis* to Khimanath and his successors: 'from now on the *mahant* jogi *gharbari* Khimanath will have the income from taxes on illicit sexual relations and from people dying childless, from the *gharbari* jogis all over the country, and the *pir ramta* Hamsanath those of the wandering jogis' (IPS 454–457).

This letter is also interesting, as concerns the question of jogis' celibacy. The Mrgasthali *mahant* accuses Khimanath of debauchery. Yet the *barapanthi* attitude seems quite lax: 'no women inside the monastery, keep them outside'. The royal authority does not come to a decision on this point; the State merely confirms a new situation, a new 'rapport de forces'. Mrgasthali

excluded from the *bhat* commensality with her relatives when her feme's status declines. Such a decline can be brought about by remarriage as well as by premarital intercourse or adultery' (A. Hofer, *ibid.*, p. 74)

has become the leading power in the sect. The State and the king do not care about the sect's moral behaviour, they do not care if Khimanath is a *gharbari mahant* but they acknowledge the shift of influence. Anyhow the trend to married life is a common feature among the jogis, where celibacy has never been essential. It is customary now, only for the main monasteries—in Nepal Mrgasthali and Dang Caughera—to be inhabited by celibate jogis and a *fortiori* headed by a celibate *mahant*. But the evolution towards the status of householder jogi and hereditary transmission to mahantship is a general character in the less important monastery. It will become the case in Srigau.

Decay

After this phase of conflict follows a period of calm lasting about twenty years, with the *mahants* Hiranath and Ksetranath (1887–1906). The relations with the State are harmonious and the Prime Minister, Dev Samsher, even bestows on the *math* the favour to keep guardsmen (IPS 465–466).

But after Ksetranath's death, his succession to mahantship creates a crisis whose episodes remain rather obscure. Theoretically in the Kanphata monasteries, the previous *mahant* designates his successor. His choice is confirmed by the assembly of the Yogis who enthrone the new *mahant*, wreathing a turban around his head and worshipping him. Then the State ratifies the nomination.

In the case here, the heir, appointed by Ksetranath, is only twelve years old. Perhaps he was belatedly selected and this choice challenged by an older disciple, or perhaps he was Ksetranath's son? Anyway a conflict arises between this young Lokhnath and one Devinath. And the Prime Minister, Chandra Samsher Rana, takes advantage of the situation to act as the lion in the Fables who devours the two litigants. The Yogi Vamsavali describes the events in the following way: 'Including Ksetranath, there were nine *mahants* in the succession from master to disciple. . . . We come to the time of the *mahant* Lokhnath when Devinath submitted a petition for getting the throne and that Sri 3 Chandra Samser expropriated all them, gave 1200 bigha to the [his own?] family and ordered the deposit in the Treasury of all jewels and gold. Lokhnath who was twelve years old, protested against this injustice and asked for a review, saying that he had nothing left for his maintenance, not even a penny, nor a *dhur* (1/20th of a *kattha*, itself 1/20th of a *bigha*). As his request was not taken into consideration, he declares: 'as a victim of your unjust tyranny, I won't drink any more water', and leaving Kathmandu, he drank only in Raxaul (the Indian border); it has been forty years now since he left his country. He settled in South India in the Hilori monastery where he died in 1999 VS. (*Yogi Vam* 89)'.

Chandra Samsher thus takes advantage of this conflict to expropriate and usurp the *guthi* lands. 'It is shameful', he is credited to have said, 'to fight over religious properties. You are not worthy of possessing them'. And he dismissed the two parties and appointed, on salary, a *mahant* exterior to the conflict.³²

If we look at the list of succession of mahantship, the *mahant* appointed by Chandra Samsher should have been Puskarnath, the author of the biography of Bhagavantanath published by Narharinath. He is supposed to have written it in 2012 vs, which gives him an exceptional—but not impossible—span of forty years as *mahant*. The composition of this biography let him express his bitterness and his conflicts with the central administration who employ him: 'in spite of many sufferings, I bought some land and built a temple for our ancestor and, if possible, I will still do it. If we had as income the amount of what the Government took from the *guthi*, which is worth a few lakhs of rupees, we could undertake the restoration for which we have been asking for since 2006 VS. The authorisation has been given twice but the tax office did not undertake this restoration and the subsidy is lost. In order to let everybody know about this, I, the mahant Puskarnath Jogi, I write this biography, in Caitra 2012 (1955) in Dang Srigau' (*Yogi Vam* 89).

Puskarnath is married, and probably, he has been appointed as *pujari* also for this reason. In fact the government prefers to deal with householders whose administration is more easily verifiable and whose succession is less controversial.

'Puskarnath's son, Yamnath, had the Bhairav temple built in 2016'. It is the first time that the word *putra* (son) is employed in an inscription in this *main*. The succession is now hereditary, from father to eldest son, and the actual Yogi in charge of the *math* is Yamnath's eldest son.

In these days, all the Srigau Yogis are married. They are *gharbari*, members of the Yogi caste. None of them is fully initiated, not even the *pujari*; they are Kanwar Yogis and not Kanphata; they did not think necessary to pass the third stage of initiation into the sect, during which the neophyte has his ears split, so as to insert the big earrings characteristic of the sect.³³

³² Chandra Samsher institutes the first agency to control and register the *guthi* holdings in 1911, after a financial scandal in one of the monasteries of Janakpur. And R. Burghart 'Bairagi Mandals', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 3, 1, 1976, pp. 84–85 relates a very similar action taken against the Mathihani *manmahant* (local authority upon the Bairagi ascetics), in 1913: 'convinced that the entire lineage of sadhus at Mathihani has become corrupted, Prime Minister Chandra Samser in Samwat 1970 (1913 A D) appointed a bairagi from an entirely different spiritual clan as the new Mathihani Man Mahant and issued a lal mohar which... made several important changes in order to prevent future abuses of authority'.

³³ On the three levels of initiation among the Yogis, see V. Bouillier, 'La caste sectaire des Kanphata Jogi dans le royaume du Nepal: l'exemple de Gorkha' *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, LXXV (1988), pp. 150–152.

In Srigau there are seven Yogi houses. They are clustered near the sanctuary and the *pujari*, the eldest son of the elder branch, lives in the old buildings of the monastery. His duty is to perform the daily or *nitya puja*. Early morning, he has to go to the *dhunighar*, the small room which shelters the fire place sacred to the Yogis, and the *gaddi*, the throne of the former *mahant*—a simple white cushion. There, he kindles the fire, recites the *mantras* to Gorakhnath and Bhairav and prepares the offerings (flowers, rice, water, incense). At the same time, a helper plays the *nagara* (kettle-drum). Then the *pujari* goes to the temple compound and worships Bhagavati, Bhairav, Bhagavantnath and Bhuvanesvarnath in their respective sanctuaries. He ends the *puja* by putting some flowers on each of the graves. And, in the evening, he performs a light offering (*arati*), going to the same places with an oil lamp and an incense-burner.

The *pujari* is now paid by the government. We have seen that the former *guthi*, which extended over six or seven *mauja*, (villages) around Srigau, has been abolished by Chandra Samser. The *pujari* gets only 3,200 rupees yearly now. And he uses this pittance to justify his lack of enthusiasm for his office: the worship of gods and ancestors, the sectarian affiliation are no longer duties or privileges, but an underpaid job!

Conclusion

Throughout the whole Indian world, monastic foundations played an important part, at the political and economic levels. Even if the documents available on Nepalese history are not very numerous, we know that, in this Hindu kingdom, religion and politics interpenetrate. The documents we have gathered, despite their paucity, on a monastery of Kanphata Yogi ascetics in Western Nepal, have shown us how dependent on the princely power such an institution can be. The out-of-the-world renouncer becomes very easily part of a political game, specially if he is a member of a sect whose connections with political powers are evident, as it is the case with the sect of Gorkhnath's followers. The foundation of the monastery was related, through the charismatic figure of Bhagavantnath, to the conquests of Prithvi Narayan Sah and his need for legitimacy. In its foundation, the monastery was part of a strategy, of a political game where its vocation to asceticism had little part. The Yogis, who were first flattered by the kings because of their powers (*siddhi*), served also, in this remote place, as agents of diffusion of the Hindu culture and of the Hindu concept of kingship in which they acted as priests for the protective deities of the kingdom. Srigau-Ranagau evolution, over two centuries, demonstrates how this cooperation between religious and political authorities developed and changed, without the perturbations or the breaking off due, in other instances, to the colonial situation. In our case, the decay of the monastery

The cultural space of a film narrative: Interpreting *Kismet* (Bombay Talkies, 1943)

Ravi Vasudevan

Department of Film Studies
University of East Anglia

Recent developments in cultural history have emphasised the importance of representation in understanding social and political processes. It has been stressed that images and ideas have a definite function in the shaping of social and political relationships, and are not merely excrescences overlaying a more 'basic' reality. Work of this type ranges from an examination of how social groups project and contest images and ideas to how, at the level of the state, procedures and categories used to order the 'real' are generated.¹

Mine is a specific problem within this conceptual field. Instead of correlating the representations of the commercial cinema to the outlook of a particular social group, I will examine them in relation to the cinema's function as an entertainment and leisure institution. In any case, it is difficult to attach film-viewing to any particular audience; and even if research into the film-going audience were done with any degree of precision, this would only be one starting point for uncovering the world view of the targeted audience. That world view would have to be identified in relation to a series of other practices and belief systems engaged in by the concerned group, a task which has been the object of cultural reception theory.²

¹ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London, Temple Smith, 1978, is the best-known work of a large and increasingly sophisticated body of literature, on plebian cultural practices; Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Oxford, Polity Press, 1988, is a broad ranging work on representation, one which also takes into account the way the state 'constructs' society.

² For an example of this field, Janet Staiger, 'The Hand-maiden of Villainy: methods and problems in studying the historical reception of a film', *Wide Angle*, Vol. 8, no. 1, 1986, pp. 19–27.

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There are a number of reference points for the analysis of the commercial cinema's representational activity. Not the least of these is that the cinema is a business, with a definite structure of ownership, of financial power and of material constraint. It is also an institution purveying distinct audio-visual pleasures; and, socially, it occupies a definite temporal position and performs certain symbolic work. Temporally, it is consumed in a leisure time as distinct from a work time; symbolically, it repeatedly works through and resolves certain patterns which are illicit or transgressive of society's normative order. Etymologically, entertainment means a 'holding between'. The cinema's work of representation performs just such an operation; its skills are used to generate fantasy spaces for its audience, spaces which are literally 'held between' phases of routine domestic and working life.

To draw out the sphere of meaning and pleasure I have identified for the commercial cinema, I will use the following material: the film's narrative and audio-visual strategies, and the products and institutions the cinema generates around itself. By the latter I mean the framework of information that a film-going audience is likely to be exposed to: publicity leaflets, newspaper advertisements and periodical literature, both of the industry and of the film press. These constitute a series of other narratives which, when placed alongside the film story itself, often afford interesting insights into the possible range of meanings which could be generated from the film.

In the course of the analysis, I will place particular emphasis on the audio-visual aspect of film culture. For, too often, there has been a tendency to interpret the meaning of a film in a direct, unmediated way. We have the representation here, and that which is represented, society, out there, and our business has been to show the way the one reflects the other. A concept of how the cultural institution mediates the depicted world, indeed, more complexly, how it constitutes that world, is needed. If details of contemporary social life are observable in a particular representation, then it is important to identify how the institution articulates meanings in terms of its own interests and its particular sensuous features.

To illustrate these methodological problems in the analysis of commercial cinema, I will refer to a highly popular work, *Kismet*, made by Bombay Talkies in 1943.³ In keeping with my emphasis on the material component of cultural institutions, I begin with a simple arithmetical exercise: *Kismet's* footage was 1,1745 feet; yet the government had imposed a limit of 11,000 feet on motion pictures because of war-time shortages of stock. Why was *Kismet* allowed to exceed this sum by 745 feet?

At this time new entrepreneurs propelled by war-time profits were thrusting their way into the motion picture industry. These new men charged that 'vested interests' in the industry had managed to set up privileged access to

³ I have made a brief note about the film's production details and a brief summary of its plot, which is appended at the end of the article.

the Commerce Department of the Government of India. Further, because the studio interests were longest established in the field, it was their representatives from Bombay Talkies, Ranjit Movietone and the Wadia group, who were inducted into the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association sub-committee to liaise with the government to determine the allocation of raw footage.⁴

The relationship between these details and the problem of identifying the specific system of culture and meaning generated through the cinema would seem an obscure one. The question boils down to this: what does 745 feet of film have to do with film culture?

I suggest an analysis resting on three basic premises. First, there is a question of the political and material framework exercised by the government. *Kismet* had direct references to the war effort; presumably, these stemmed from contemporary anxieties about the situation. Yet the references conformed to the particular terms of the government's war mobilisation drives. The induction of such propaganda in the film could only strengthen speculation that Bombay Talkies access to extra footage arose from the studio's special relationship with the government. So the government's power in the field of censorship and material controls was manifest in the narrative of the film. However, I will show that the effects were not so straight-forward; the film and publicity material display other attitudes to the war effort as well.

My second proposal is that the contest for power within the industry is apparent in the film's narrative structure. I argue that the interests of Bombay Talkies and the larger studio system are represented in *Kismet*'s story. This is done by alluding to the type of relationship the established studios bore to the cinema, and the way this relationship was endangered by other interests whose only motive was a desire for profit.⁵

In drawing attention to this possible interpretation I do not suggest that all film narratives of this period obsessively focused on the conflict within the industry. But in this particular case the representation of the industry does acquire a certain significance. This is for two reasons. The conflict between Bombay Talkies and the new interests is highlighted by the popular

⁴ Information about the relations amongst the government and sections of the industry is drawn from the following material: 'A raw deal in raw films', editorial, *Film India*, February 1943, pp. 3-9; 'The scandal about extra footage', *Ibid.*, p. 13; 'The length', *Journal of the Film Industry*, Vol. 3, No. 6, February 1943, pp. 11-12; see also E. Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 124.

⁵ In discussing the different ways representational practices describe relations between people and the social world, Roger Chartier has pointed out the importance of 'institutionalized objective forms by means of which representants .mark in visible and perpetuated fashion the existence of the group, the class, or the community'. *Cultural History*, pp. 9-10. In my interpretation Bombay Talkies and the studio system are 'representants'—though not in a conscious way—whose interests are depicted in the story of *Kismet*.

periodical literature in relation to this particular film,⁶ so the conflict becomes part of the framework of knowledge available to a habitual audience, and thereby, part of the range of possible interpretations that can be made of the film. But the industrial conflict acquires such a density of narrative significance because this was a historically important period for the studios. They retained their privileged position in relation to their rivals, and nothing better illustrates this than the extra footage gained by *Kismet*. As I will show, *Kismet* goes about the job of justifying this privilege, to the point of underlining the superior ability of the studio system in generating cinematic pleasure.

The analysis at this point is geared towards emphasising that pleasure and meaning in the cinematic experience is strongly self-referential rather than merely referring to extra-cinematic experience. But this self-referentiality encompasses not only the act of viewing and understanding the on-screen story, but also the reverberations set off when this process is combined with off-screen information. Most commonly, this type of information focuses on the stars performing in the film, and generates a fascination for stories about their off-screen lives, their lifestyle and affairs, their career choices, constituting another imaginary universe which is often invested in the imaginary world of the film fiction.⁷ In this instance I have underlined the importance of off-screen information about the studio. This was because the distribution of significance between studio and star was in a transitional phase. The emergence of the star as a decisive agent in the industry was yet to take place.⁸

This brings me to my third and final premise though, by now, we have finally left that 745 feet behind. The institution of the cinema has a certain distinct presence in society. It not only affords us the ornate indulgence of our desire to look, it also positions itself in relation to other institutions and representational drives. This placement may be in relation to certain other media such as broadcasting and the phonograph; central because of the importance of the film song. But, more complexly, the cinema is aligned with encompassing images of society, figurations which present it in relation to definite discourses about tradition, modernity, and formations of subjectivity and identity. In particular, I will take up the way the cinema reworks normative narratives of the individual life cycle, highlighting the transgressive role but reintegrating it into the normative and how it, in this sense, supplies a regulated outlet from the social norm, one which is both transgressive and recuperable.

⁶ 'The scandal about extra footage'

⁷ For a suggestive analysis of this interplay of off- and on-screen stories in relation to an Indian star, Nargis, see Rosie Thomas, 'Sanctity and Scandal: the mythologization of *Mother India*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, Vol. 11, no. 3, 1989, pp. 11-30.

⁸ Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-129.

The Political Structure of the Narrative

The references to the war in *Kismet* ensured that there would be no differences between the colonial government and the film-makers over the depiction of this issue. The references appear at two points in the film. The first is that of the theatrical performance of the song *Hindustan Hamara Hai*. The second is an incident in which newspaper headlines about the war situation are shouted out by a vendor. Significantly, these references to the war effort find no mention in the publicity synopses released for the film, nor in the newspaper advertisements. The patriotic song is included in the film song books⁹ sold to the public, but the song does not tell a story as the synopsis does. The synopsis provides a better index of what is offered as the attractive features of the narrative, and, in the case of *Kismet*, these are the romantic and mystery elements of the plot.¹⁰

To my mind, the suppression of any reference to the war effort in the synopsis indicates that the film makers understood that this theme would invoke ambiguous reactions in the public. The structure and performance of the song lay upon this knowledge.

The song proclaims a readiness to defend *Hindustan* against the whole world. It is only towards the end of the song that the enemy is named as the Germans and the Japanese.¹¹

More significant is the way the theatrical scene changes during the song. There are three segments to the performance, each separated by the drawing of curtains. First, there is a scene of army mobilisation. Second, the ordinary citizenry invoke the patriotic song, with Rani, the crippled heroine, leading the singing; finally Rani, now in the image of Durga, stands before a map of India, heraldic women figures surrounding her, the soldiers of the first scene marching out from either side of the map.

The succession of scenes in this performance recalls what in nineteenth century British and Indian theatrical parlance used to be called 'dissolving

⁹ The song book is composed of song lyrics and, normally, synopses in both English and Hindi. There is a substantial collection of song books available at the National Film Archives of India, Pune

¹⁰ The following excerpts will suggest the tone of the synopsis:

Shekhar was a crook or was he not?... Why did such a calling claim so fine a man? ... Rani... needed all the sympathy in the world.. Shekhar tendered her his. sympathy.... Fed on her adoration. Shekhar's sympathy glowed into a warmer feeling....

¹¹ The refrain of the song is *Door hato, e duniya walon Hindustan Hamara Hai*! It is only in the last verse of the song that it is specified that the Hindustani must stand firm against the Germans and the Japanese

views'.¹² In the British context, new techniques of scenery shifting and lighting allowed for the depiction of changes in time and place. Perhaps these representations invited a wonderment at the new vistas opened up by the communications revolution of the nineteenth century.

The dissolving views of *Kismet*'s theatrical scene are rather different. Here what is shifting is not a register of space and time, but one of iconic figures. The separate placement of state and citizenry in the first two segments of the performance are now condensed into the masculine imagery of soldiers being inspired to the defence of the nation, as represented by the female deity. Further, within this concluding scene, editing techniques suggest the layered nature of iconic space. There are cuts between the soldiers arrayed in front of Durga, to Durga by herself, the soldiers presence now relegated to their voices on the soundtrack. So, within the final scene, there is a movement between the aggressive figures of army and state and a more culturally essentialised image.

I am suggesting that there is a slip in the narration from the starting point of the theatrical scenes, when the audience is invited to identify with the war drives of the state, to the third scene, which inducts a shifting relation between these drives and a traditional iconography. The movement of the theatrical performance sets the terms for the renewing of links with the larger narrative logic of the film. For the changes of scene recentre the heroine till she is standing immobilised before a map of India. It is her helplessness and her unfulfilled desires which will be the major concern of the hero and of the story, a focus which is emphasised in newspaper advertisements.¹³

¹² For example, Christine Gledhill, 'The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation' in Gledhill, ed., *Home is where the heart is*, London, British Film Institute, 1987, p. 21, for an outline of these developments in British theatre; and R.K. Yagnik, *The Indian Theatre. its origins and later development under European influence, with special reference to Western India*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1933, pp. 92-117, for Indian developments

¹³ One advertisement for *Kismet* shows Rani praying; underneath, there is the caption:

He hears
All sincere prayers and grants
All right things as He did in *KISMET*

Bombay Chronicle 27 February 1943.

Another advertisement runs:

Fighting with fate
She discovered a life mate
Who made her a princess from a pauper

Bombay Chronicle 27 March 1943.

I must stress that I am not in any sense affirming that the final scene presents an authentic constant identity at the core of transient 'modern' identities. Rani's incarnation as Durga, clad in a glittering cardboard and papier maché outfit, harks no further back than the deities of mass produced calendar art of the turn of the century.¹⁴ But this opposition allows the flow of images to change track from a state defined 'war effort' to that of a traditional India inspiring action in her defence.

I will relate the image of the female figure as object of inspiration and object of defence to the second reference to the war. This consists of a triad of newspaper headlines called out by a vendor when our thief-hero is passing through a street. They are as follows:

Haar Ki Chori-Chor Lapata
(a gap follows)
Hitler Ka Hawai Hamla Bekaar
*Azad Hind Ka Sampadak Girafat*¹⁵

The thief then buys the newspaper from the vendor, and moves on.

It is useful here to think over the relationship between these narrative levels, i.e., between the reference to the main story of the thief and to those relating to war and domestic unrest. The first political headline stresses the safety of the British at home, the second their power to arrest resistance in India.

In relation to the British then, we hear that an attack has been repulsed and a force arrested. But these statements are bracketed between a verbal and a visual reference to the thief—a figure, precisely, who escapes arrest. There is a threat here which is still active. Not only then is the political narrative subordinated by the more abiding story about the helpless girl and the noble, stylish thief who comes to her aid. The thief has a nationalist resonance, a residual energy and force, that derives from his placement in this sequence. And the metaphor is extended through the way the romantic imagery is arranged; for the girl is aligned with the nation, which the thief will restore to its rightful position. The issues of national defence and mobilisation are pushed away from the overt sites of their statement and are expressed through the conventions of a less discomfiting address.

¹⁴ For a suggestive analysis about transformations in popular representations resulting from the introduction of mechanical reproduction, see Tapati Guha Thakurta, 'Artists, artisans and mass picture production in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Calcutta: the changing iconography of popular prints', *South Asia Research*, 8, 1, 1988, pp. 3–45.

¹⁵ Necklace stolen—thief missing;

Hitler's aerial attack fails;

Editor of Azad Hind arrested.

The Industry Narrates Its Own Anxieties

I want to move on now to giving a fuller sense of how this narrative interlocks with the narrative of the Bombay film industry at a particular phase of its evolution. I suggest that the industrial narrative is given a place within the story through the themes of usurpation and resolution of the resulting disturbances. In effect the film industry narrates its own anxieties and desired self-image through the film narrative.

In this connection the conflict between old and new wealth, between Babuji, Rani's father, who once owned the theatre and Inderjit, the hero's father, who usurps it, parallels the anxieties felt by Bombay Talkies in the early forties when the established studios felt threatened by the entrance of speculative wealth.¹⁶ As I have shown these new, fly-by-night capitalists were being held off by the influence which the older financiers wielded with the government through their privileged access to scarce raw footage. The older studios' fears of dispossession were prophetic, for the economic pressures of the war period signalled the demise of their power within the film industry.¹⁷ In *Kismet* these anxieties about the loss of wealth and position are handled through the use of popular narrative concerns which focus on the disturbance and reinstatement of the true lines of inheritance and identity.¹⁸ The inheritance which has been lost, that of Babuji and his family, is constantly returned to them, for Shekhar's crimes invariably involve the transfer of money or precious objects from his father, Inderjit, to Rani, Babuji's daughter.

But in fact the old wealth, represented by Babuji, is never restored to its old authority. It is only the travails of this dispossessed family which are brought to a close. Babuji's debts to Inderjit are written off, Rani's pregnant sister is permitted to marry Inderjit's younger son, her lover, and Rani herself enters the family as the daughter-in-law. In short, what is enacted is not the full restoration of that which was usurped, but a process of reconciliation which culminates in the humanising of the ruthless Inderjit.

Ironically the film narrative was more prescient than the narrative of contests within the film industry. For the time being the studio system had succeeded in holding off the upstarts, but the film narrative upheld the victory of the parvenue. However, the work of the narrative is exactly this, to transcend the simple polarity between defeat and victory and to find a third point where reconciliation, resolution, and more latently, a favourable future for the entertainment industry can be grounded. Thus, on the one

¹⁶ For example, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, who was associated with Bombay Talkies, noted that speculative dealing was destabilising the industry and discouraged substantial investment. *Film India*, March 1943, pp. 33-37

¹⁷ Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-129

¹⁸ For an elaboration of this analysis, see Ravi Vasudevan, 'The Melodramatic Mode and the Commercial Hindi Cinema: notes on film history, narrative and performance in the 1950s', *Screen*, 30, 3, 1989, pp. 29-51

hand the narrative of the film appears unduly pessimistic about the fortunes of established capital, given the balance of power in the industry at the time. On the other hand the narrative of *Kismet* appears to entertain a hope that the new force on the horizon, Shekhar, the figure who will inherit power, will be able to neutralise the malign features of the opponent and to accommodate the older interests.

At this point, I need to explain why it is that I have insisted on relating the problem of economic change in the film story to the situation in the industry. After all, the phenomenon of black money and a highly speculative investment climate was not peculiar to the film industry but was a wider feature of the economic situation. If a correlation can be drawn between these themes and the film narrative, then why should I reject a reflectionist approach to cultural meaning? This is because it would be an exercise in redundancy to establish that economic pressures in society are given expression in cultural activity. It is instead in the particularity of the cultural institution that we should be looking for meaning, and especially for a meaning which is encompassed in the particular sensate pleasures the cinema offers. In this context the striking features of the narrative of *Kismet* is that we are called upon to examine the destiny of an apparatus of spectatorial pleasure.

First, the clash itself takes place over an entertainment institution, the theatre. Not only are we invited to look at an entertainment form within the film which has similarities to the conditions of presentation and spectatorship of the cinema; we are asked to do this in ways which highlight our enjoyment of the cinema as a place in which our desire to look is indulged.

I refer here to the device of 'point of view',¹⁹ a type of editing structure which, under the influence of the Hollywood cinema, has come to connote the narration of a story from the optical viewpoint of a particular character. Essentially it is composed of a triadic editing structure on which there may be variations and incomplete applications. Shot 1 shows a character looking at a point outside the frame or off-screen; shot 2 shows us an object, or character, or set of objects or characters; shot 3 returns us to the first shot. Convention has it that the object in shot 2 is seen from the character's point of view in shots 1 and 3 and from the point occupied by him or her in space. What happens in a number of instances in *Kismet* is that the character whose point of view is established in this way is removed and we, the audience, are put in his place.

For example, in the second sequence of the film Shekhar comes upon a float which is advertising a theatrical performance. Our attention, which was fixed on Shekhar, is diverted via his point of view to a dancer's performance on the float. Shekhar himself is removed from our vision and,

¹⁹ Edward Branigan 'The Point of View Shot' in Bill Nichols, *Movies and Methods*, Vol II, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1985; also Edward Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema. a theory of narration and subjectivity in classical film*, Berlin and New York, Mouton, 1984.

fleetingly, our attention fixes on the female dancer, even though she has no narrative function in the film.²⁰ In another sequence, Shekhar and Babuji watch Rani singing her song in the *Hindustan Hamara Hai* pageant. Our view of the performance is relayed through the gaze of Babuji and Shekhar, but that introductory view is also periodically forgotten, so that we see the performance directly, in an unmediated way. A theatrical performance Shekhar and Babuji look at becomes a filmic performance we are looking at, a performance which fills the film frame, and which is unmediated by internal spectatorship.²¹

In summary then, the intrusion of the film industry into the film narrative is achieved (a) by a thematic arrangement which makes an entertainment institution the object of conflict and (b) by rendering that entertainment through processes of spectatorship which echo and then project our own film-viewing situation. The cinema foregrounds, in the film itself, its own particular ways of generating pleasure.

This is done by the use of 'point of view' structures; but it is also brought about by deploying metaphors for the cinema. The key metaphor here is the loss and recovery of Rani's powers of movement. Her paralysis is the point of stasis between the past and the future of the cinema. Both Babuji, the former owner of the theatre, and Shekhar, projected as the future owner, are associated as producers and spectators with those points in the story when Rani is a mobile figure on the stage. Opposed to this Inderjit, the *nouveau riche* figure, holds her as a static, immobile image. In this sense the meaning of the film is not only that the prevalent institutional structure of the industry is endangered, but, more pertinently for the film spectator, that the apparatus of cinema and its specific pleasures are endangered.

The Representation of Film's Relationship to Society

In the analysis so far I have put a lot of weight on the argument that the institution of the cinema presents images of itself, its sphere of activity and its travails through *Kismet's* narrative. I now want to turn to the issue of how the cinema represents its relationship with society in the film narrative. There are two levels involved in this representational activity. There is a

²⁰ This is an instance of the 'incomplete' application of point of view procedures. Shot 1 shows Shekhar looking off-screen, shot 2 shows the dancer; but instead of another shot signalling the return to Shekhar's point of view, Shekhar enters the space of shot 2, entering the space of his own vision, as it were. I have noticed this elsewhere, and am trying to develop an argument about the renewed externalising of our viewpoint that such a strategy, consciously or not, effects.

²¹ This is analogous with processes of spectatorial substitution observed for the Hollywood musical. Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982, especially Ch. 1. Other spectatorial practices characteristic of Indian culture are drawn into the film viewing situation. A particularly prevalent one is that of the devotional look directed by a worshipper onto a deity. There is an example of this in *Kismet*, as Rani prays to Krishna.

contextually defined level of interaction and representation. This I have illustrated by the conjunctural intrusion of discourses about the war, whose articulation in the narrative was influenced by the government's powers of censorship and by its powers over the allocation of raw footage.

In a less contextual, more persistent and regular way, the cinema's representational activity is related to the drive to find social legitimacy for itself. To do so the cinema must wander further afield; it must move beyond itself to generate images of society, normative models and ideal types. It is impelled to do so for institutions devoted to pleasure were not acceptable as a matter of course in the contemporary framework of Indian public opinion, least of all an institution which draws upon our fascination with sexuality. In the 1920s, when government canvassed the opinion of Indian and European elites about the cinema,²² the responses displayed an anxiety about the immorality of the institution. The main reference point for these fears was the western cinema. The British feared that race authority would suffer from the display of western norms of sexuality before an Indian audience. The Indian elite deemed that this display would have an effect on the morality of Indian audiences and should certainly not be a model for Indian films. Here are the outlines of what may be referred to as the anxious areas of a middle-class public sphere. This anxiety revolved around the representation of intimate relations in an open and spectacular way. The cinema was, therefore, subject to a regime of censorship and of moral regulation.

In the face of such regulation, film narratives of a conventional type rest on a double imperative. They have to draw upon cinema's capacity to transgress, to realise exactly those features which are not allowed a display in daily public life, and which the audience, therefore, finds particularly attractive. But on the other hand they also have to meet the demands of public morality, to close the space opened up by the transgressions of the cinema.

In *Kismet* there are sequences charged with a dream-like wantonness, even though the narrative elides their sexuality. Shekhar sees a necklace adorning his stepmother. The narrative suggests that he is transfixed by a desire to steal it, but this is rendered through a close up of the ornament on her neck which is intimate and even perverse in the glint of metal on flesh. Later, our thief-hero enters the heroine's home at night; the narrative justifies this as a quest for the necklace. But his slippery, mercurial movements through the various rooms, including the heroine's, and the voyeuristic glances allowed by a torch light, all hint at the sexual undertones of the situation. Even the hero's desire to enable his beloved to walk again has a similar resonance. For the achievement of this desire is displayed through a spectacle oriented to fulfil male visual drives. Rani enacts a spectacular dance to display the renewed wholeness of her body.

²² *Indian Cinematograph Committee, 1927-28, Evidence*, Vols I-IV, Calcutta, Government of India Central Publications Branch, 1928.

It is from such transgressive spaces that the narrative has to move on and generate a normative system within which it can place itself. I have a hypothesis to propose, that this normative system is what has been referred to by psychoanalysts as a regulative psychobiography. Essentially such a system outlines a model for the stages of life that a man is meant to go through.²³ Within the Hindu symbolic order, these are well known: *brahmacharya* (studenthood), *grahastha* (householder), *vanaprastha* (hermit) and *samnyasa* (renouncer). This order prescribes the path that must be undertaken if duty and morality are to be fulfilled. The order may be called a regulative psychobiography because it also prescribes the various dispositions of psycho-sexual energy that different stages of life require: from intellectual energy and celibacy in studenthood, to the regulated deployment of sexuality in the generation of a family, and the gradual withdrawal from material and sensual attachment in later life.²⁴

I hypothesise that symbolic narratives and cultural institutions often reorder this kind of prescriptive biography in relation to various perceived social needs. For example, Romila Thapar has pointed out that a counter-cultural articulation of the symbolic order was fashioned in ancient Indian society by a short-circuiting of life stages in a direct, conscious move to the position of *samnyasa*. The position of a householder, that stable intermediary term and fount of social respectability, would be bypassed in a framework of active dissent.²⁵ In popular cinema, such a trajectory is classically illustrated by the heroes of *Devdas* (P.C. Barua, 1935; Bimal Roy, 1955) and *Pyaasa* (Guru Dutt, 1957).

I would suggest that in a regulated, stable fashion, entertainment institutions are earmarked for the manipulation of such symbolic systems. They provide a counter-balance against the weight of family life and the pressure to conform to the normative patterns laid out for psycho-social satisfaction. Entertainment is particularly important in providing a systematic outlet, both from the rigours of the working day and of domestic life and in creating fantasy spaces that diverge from mundane routine.

²³ The notion that cultures have a definite perception about the stages of life that a person goes through needs to be historically controlled; Philippe Aries has suggested, for example, that there is a definite history to the emergence of the notion of child, adolescent and, indeed, significant changes in the concept of old age between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries *Centuries of Childhood*, translated by Rober Baldick, London, Jonathan Cape, 1973, ch. 1. However, I am using a notion of a normative order, which pertains to questions of morality and not only perception. Undoubtedly though, such a system also requires historicisation.

²⁴ Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-analytical Study of Childhood and Society in India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1978. I have suggested that various peculiarities are observable in Indian film narratives, especially the way in which transitions from one life stage to the next take place. While the path of development for the male child parallels that of Oedipal conflict, there is a marked denial of masculine powers in resolving the relationship with the father; and a greater weight is placed on the mother's role in gaining an identity for her son than could ever be conceived of in the Oedipal paradigm. See my 'Melodramatic Mode', *op cit*, pp. 32–37.

²⁵ 'Renunciation: the making of a counter-culture?' in *Ancient Indian Social History*, Delhi, Orient Longman, 1978, pp. 63–104, especially 79–84.

To put it almost formulaically, the thief, the one who removes property and effectively questions the legitimacy of certain lines of inheritance, is exactly the 'other' of the householder, he who enshrines stability and lineage. The thief-hero is outside the symbolic order, or perhaps could be said to lie within its shadows, its negative field. The recurrence of this figure in the commercial cinema from the early 1940s indicates that the symbolic narratives generated by the cinematic institution have become the stable, long-term reference points for the fantasy of a non- or asocial norm.

But this is not, therefore, a space for escapism. For in popular film narrative there is a return to the orbit of the normative and morally acceptable, and an annulment of the excesses which have been released in the narrative.

In fact, as I hope I have been able to show, the thief-hero is himself an ultimately moral figure, for he does not so much negate the householder's position as question his legitimacy, and effectively seeks to relocate the property with the rightful heirs. He thus already presents the possibility of a moral reordering of the household and of property relations within it. But it would be wildly inadequate to reduce his functions in this way; for it is above all the act of thieving, its glamorous, performative, and, as I have suggested, its implicit sexual features which are so attractive.

The moral ending may well be set by the thief, it may indeed stem from his powers and actions; but it is another figure who alone can re-integrate the narrative to symbolic order. It is in this context that the figure of Rani needs to be resurrected. Hitherto, Rani has appeared in this analysis as a destitute, impaired object of the hero's romantic and benevolent attentions. By the end of the tale she has recovered her powers of movement and used the hero's romantic attraction for her as a bargaining point with his father Inderjit. She, her father and sister are granted various favours and allowances, including the lifting of criminal charges against Shekhar.

Why does this re-integration of the established symbolic order have to be enacted through a woman who has hitherto been quite ineffectual? This is because the period of the transgression has been inaugurated by the loss of the hero's mother, and he can be brought back into the space of the household only when another woman who can arrest his father's aggression has been found. It would appear that, within the contested space of the household, she functions as a buffer between father and son in their conflict over authority and, indeed, over herself. In a sense, the woman must soften the trauma of the contest between father and son and so ensure a relatively stable process of adjustment, reconciliation and inheritance.

The result is the achievement of something like a joint family, wherein different generations and a number of embryonic family units are amicably brought together within one family space. What is interesting is not only that films of this period integrate their narratives into such a perception of the social norm, but that the film industry also generated information

about its industrial arrangements in terms of the same familial metaphor. Thereby, the industry carved out a space not only for the legitimacy of its products but also for its production system as a socially acceptable institution. Most of the narratives about film enterprises emphasised the way they functioned as family units, from stories of Mrs. Phalke pawning her jewels and washing film negatives, to memories of the studios of Prabhat and Bombay Talkies as households in which a benevolent paternal regard for the employee was of foremost importance. In Devika Rani's phrase, Bombay Talkies was like one big happy family.²⁶

These narratives not only identified the studios with such socially legitimate models, they also came to reflect various anxieties about the structure of their so-called family. In this regard, it would be interesting to date the emergence of the thief-hero, as opposed to other asocial hero types such as the renouncer. For, in 1943, when *Kismet* was released, the spectre of black money assailed not only the established studios but industrial arrangements as a whole. In particular, these years witnessed the emergence of the star as a powerful economic phenomenon, one who freelanced, and was not tied by contract to any of the established studios.²⁷ The star was a free floating agent, disruptive of all existing power and authority; one could not have a more striking analogy for the functions of the thief-hero vis-à-vis the family in *Kismet*. Perhaps here we have a prescient vision of the studio system's own dark future, and of the prime arbiter of that destiny.

²⁶ See the reminiscences available in *Indian Talkies 1931-56*, Bombay, Film Federation of India, 1956.

²⁷ Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *op. cit.*, pp 127-129

Synopsis

KISMET (Bombay Talkies, 1943)

(Producer: S. Mukerji, Screenplay and Direction: Gyan Mukerji, Cast: Ashok Kumar and Mumtaz Shanti).

Characters

Babuji a destitute old man, father of Rani, the heroine; the one time owner of a theatre which he lost to Inderjit;

Inderjit the grasping, *nouveau riche* owner of the theatre; father of Shekhar;

Shekhar the thief-hero, later revealed as the runaway son of Inderjit; the romantically inclined benefactor of Rani;

Rani the crippled ex-dancer; now a professional singer in Inderjit's theatre; she will recover her powers of movement with Shekhar's help.

The Story

Shekhar, the thief-hero is released from jail. He becomes involved with the destinies of a family who have fallen on hard times. Babuji lost his theatre to his grasping employee, Inderjit. His daughter Rani was a child dancer but became crippled in a performance. She sings in what is now Inderjit's theatre. Shekhar becomes her benefactor, stealing for her rent, plying her with gifts, and arranging for an operation on her leg. Shekhar's thefts are at Inderjit's expense. Unknown to either, they are in fact father and son. Shekhar had run away as a child when his widowed father took another wife. The film ends with the reconciliation of father and son through the medium of Rani. Rani is betrothed to Shekhar and her family's travails come to an end.

Sris Chandra Chatterjee: The quest for a national architecture

Samita Gupta

Nowrosji Wadia College
Pune

The architecture created due to the British presence in India, has generally been ignored by serious scholars of Indian architecture. Only Fergusson, Havell and Percy Brown found the subject worth discussing, and devoted a few pages to it at the end of their treatises on Indian architecture as a whole.¹ It is only in the last few years that scholars have begun to turn their attention toward the examination and assessment of colonial architecture and the imperial policies that created it.²

Contemporary Indian reactions to the new architecture have hardly been touched upon by anyone. This essay is an effort to evaluate a part of this reaction, through the writings and work of an Indian architect, Sris Chandra Chatterjee, who tried to give a nationalistic direction to modern Indian architecture, in the two or three decades before independence. He wrote two books, and a few articles, and gave many lectures to various groups, and universities in India and the U.S.A.³ In his writings he set out his ideas,

¹ J. Fergusson, *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture*, London, 1982; E.B. Havell, *Indian Architecture*, London, 1913; P. Brown, *Indian Architecture, (Islamic Period)* Vol. 2, Bombay, 1942.

² Grithi Von Mitterwalner, *Chaul*, Berlin, 1964; S. Nilsson, *European Architecture in India 1750–1850*, London, 1968; A.D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment*, London, 1976; *Lotus International 26, Quarterly Architectural Review: Hybrid Architecture*, Gruppo Editoriale Electa, Milan, 1980–81; G. Stamp, *British Architecture in India 1857–1947*, Sir George Birdwood Memorial Lecture, Royal Society of Arts Journal, No. 5298, Vol CXXIX, London, 1981; *Victorian Bombay: Urbs Prima in Indis*, Art and Architectural Research Papers, June, II, 1977; S. Gupta, *Architecture and the Raj: Western Deccan 1700–1900*, Delhi, 1985; J. Morris, *Stones of Empire*, Oxford, 1983; R.G. Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens Baker & Imperial Delhi*, Delhi, 1981; P. Davies, *Splendours of the Raj*, London, 1985; T.R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, London, 1989; R. Fernor–Hesketch, ed., *Architecture of the British Empire*, London, 1986; R. Llewellyn Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow*, Delhi, 1985.

Nilsson was the first to examine the political use of architecture by the British before 1850. For buildings of western Deccan after that, see S. Gupta, *op. cit.* Metcalf discusses the effects of Orientalist theories on the architectural policies of the British.

³ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha. Architecture and Culture*, Calcutta, 1942. (Henceforth *Magadha*). *Architects and Architecture Then and Now, an Essay on Human Planning*. Calcutta, 1948

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as well as a programme for the revival of national architecture. Using these writings as the main source it is possible to examine this short-lived venture and seek reasons for its ultimate failure,

Background

The architectural scene in India at the beginning of this century was complex. The establishment of British imperialism had initially resulted in the official adoption of European styles in the public buildings in the country. It is now a known fact that this architecture was the result of a deliberate policy taken up to serve the imperatives of the colonial power, and to emphasise the dominance and cultural superiority of the ruling group. Most of the big public structures of the nineteenth century were constructed by the Public Works Departments, which became the instrument for implementing the official policy and imposed what came to be recognised as an 'Imperial' style of architecture.⁴ Towards the end of the 1860s, the purely European styles, (neo-classical and neo-Gothic) were changed and developed into the so-called 'Indo-Saracenic' style. This was the result of an effort to integrate British rule in the Indian context at a political level. At a more practical level, the men who first pioneered the adoption of this style⁵ were deeply influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement of William Morris in England. They believed that the official P.W.D. style was unsuitable for India, and was slowly killing the spirit of Indian architectural craftsmen. They wanted to change the P.W.D. methods, and argued that the meaningful evolution of future architecture in India could only be achieved by encouraging the old master-masons to be freely associated in the construction of new buildings. A greater cooperation between the traditional master craftsman or *mistri*, the official architect and the engineer, they felt, was absolutely necessary for the revival of Indian architectural craft.⁶ The 'Indo-Saracenic' style was slowly accepted by the government, but not without resistance. The question gave rise to a vociferous debate amongst all those interested in it. The debate reached a climax when proposals for

(Henceforth *Architects and Architecture*). *India and the New Order, an Essay in Human Planning* Calcutta, 1949 Pt II. (Henceforth *India and New Order*). *Devayatan O Bharat Sabhyata*, Calcutta 1957. His short pamphlets include: *Glory of Baranasi: An appeal for restoring its Aesthetic grandeur and Spiritual Harmony, a Constructive Scheme*. (Calcutta, no date) A lecture delivered at Roerich Museum, N. York. *Indian Arts and Industries, Scheme for Renovation* (Calcutta, 1934) a lecture delivered to Association of Engineers. (henceforth *Indian Arts and Industries*) *National Value of Indian Architecture* (Calcutta, 1933). His other lectures and writings are untraceable.

⁴ See S. Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp 8–25 and pp 152–153; also S. Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 62

⁵ The most well-known of these were John Lockwood Kipling, E.B. Havell and Percy Brown.

⁶ E.B. Havell, *op. cit.*, pp 214–249 Havell's views are representative of the whole group of people influenced by William Morris.

the building of the new capital at Delhi were projected, after 1911. Viceroy Hardinge was a powerful spokesman for those attempting to harmonise east and west in architecture, his beliefs stemming no doubt from his desire to placate Indian opinion at a critical juncture of imperial rule.

The 'Indo-Saracenic' style was an attempt at syncretism, where Indian architectural elements and ornamental devices like carved brackets, *chhajjas* and *chhatris*, were grafted on to structures which were basically Victorian in nature and plan.⁷ This gave the buildings an exotic and superficially 'Indian' look.

Gradually the style spread all over India with many well-known architects and engineers taking it up for their projects.⁸ The twists and turns of the official policy had its effect on the Princely States too. The princes first adopted the European styles and later the 'Indo-Saracenic' for their palaces and other public buildings. A genuine fascination for something novel, and a desire to please and flatter the English rulers were perhaps the motivating forces.⁹

In the cities and towns of British India, wealthy citizens contributed huge sums to the government for the construction of new public buildings. But they allowed themselves to be content with the official style taken up by the P.W.D. This apparent apathy may have also actually been due to a political desire to please the government, as well as a genuine respect for the new style and methods, to which such symbolic values as 'modern' or 'technological' were attached. The new comprador groups in the large cities were rapidly westernising their material culture. They were prepared to accept the European architectural forms as cultural models. They now built mansion residences on neo-classical patterns, and many moved into the bungalows in the cantonments and civil stations.¹⁰ The status of the owners of these homes became inextricably linked with the degree of westernisation they followed in their lifestyles.¹¹

Changes in Construction Methods

Important changes in construction materials and the building industry were taking place at the beginning of this century. With acceleration of construction activity, it became a lucrative field for private investment by English firms in India. Synthetic products and prefabricated parts were imported into the country in large quantities. Floor tiles, corrugated iron, iron frames, prefabricated columns, stone brackets, statuary, coloured glass, synthetic

⁷ See S. Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁸ Chisholm in Madras, Mant in Kolhapur and Ajmer, Growse in Bulandshahr, Stevens and Wittet in Bombay, and Jacob in Jaipur and Bikaner.

⁹ T.R. Metcalf, *op. cit.*, Chap. 4.

¹⁰ M.S. Mate, S. Gupta and S.J. Varma, 'Westernization of Urban Material Culture of the Middle-class in 19th and 20th centuries in Pune—a case study'. Unpublished monograph, University of Poona, 1987.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, concluding chapter.

stone, Portland cement, and later new substances like Malthoid and Valmoid, were increasingly superseding local materials. Provincial governments were often pressurised by British business interests and the Government of India, into using the more expensive imports even if cheaper local materials were available.¹²

The P.W.D. structures were designed and built by European architects and engineers. Indians participated as junior supervisors, assistants and draftsmen, trained at the engineering colleges. Indians also worked as contractors and some became very prosperous. It was not till 1910 that the first School of Architecture became functional. It was set up as a part of the Bombay School of Art. It started with a four-year course, soon expanded to a five-year diploma course, which was later affiliated to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

The official aim of the school was to teach the principles of both Indian and European architecture, so as to develop 'greater and nobler monuments of Indian architecture'.¹³ But, in actual fact more emphasis was laid on the study of Classical European architecture. This is evident from the following quotations taken from a book written by a former Principal of the Art School:

It is safe to assume that India can take much from Greece in the development of her own incomparable Arts, and every step is taken to encourage Grecian studies with this end in view. It is believed that the more clearly the principles of composition, proportion and general design underlying Grecian monuments are understood, the more clearly will Indian students be able to grasp the principles which underlie the works of their own country.¹⁴

In other words, Indian students would understand their own architecture by first absorbing the principles of European Classical architecture! Again 'Bombay is fortunate as regards architectural education, for it stands for the best Western ideals only'.¹⁵

The inevitable result of such an ambivalent training programme was, that the young students developed an aesthetic based on Graeco-Roman forms and become alienated from their own traditions. They were increasingly enticed by the expensive new technology and Western building styles.

The traditional building art of India thus gradually fell into disuse. It survived in pockets, mostly in the Princely States, where temples and private

¹² P.W.D. File, Gen 33 of 1856. Bombay; P.W.D. letters to Home Govt. 1871-75 Bombay; P.W.D. (1) of 1870, Bombay.

¹³ S. Gladstone, *The Bombay Revival of Indian Art*, Govt. of Bombay, Bombay, no date, pp. 130-140

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 135.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 140

buildings continued to be built in the old way under the patronage of the Princes.¹⁶

If the government art schools had an ambivalent attitude towards the revival of traditional architecture, the nationalist politicians hardly gave it any thought. Declarations regarding an architectural policy for the future by the Congress leaders were conspicuous by their absence.

It is against this background of the encroaching alienation of Indian architects from their roots, that the work of Sris Chandra can be truly understood. He raised his voice in appeal for the formulation of a national policy for the revival of Indian architecture.

Sris Chandra Chatterjee—Influences

A man with a mission, Sris Chandra tried to stem the tide almost single-handed, through a purposeful campaign spread over a number of years. A major part of his early career was spent as a Civil Engineer in Bikaner State. Here he undoubtedly became familiar with the Indo-Saracenic style, and the work of Swinton Jacob who built important structures in this style at Bikaner.¹⁷ At Bikaner traditional methods were also patronised by the rulers, so he also came into contact with several master-craftsmen and their traditional method of working. This knowledge deepened with his association with the project to renovate the Dilwara temple at Mt. Abu, where he went often from Bikaner. As a Civil Engineer, he was well aware too, of the working of the P.W.D.¹⁸

He also travelled to the neighbouring Princely States, and even to Ujjain and Vijayanagar. He thus gained a good idea of ancient Indian designs and town-planning. He discovered that the old master-craftsmen, though becoming increasingly irrelevant, were still available, and buildings were still being made in the old way, in some pockets in the country. He thus found continuity in the methods followed in twentieth century Ujjain, Vijayanagar and Bikaner and those of ancient times.¹⁹

These early influences were instrumental in shaping his ideas of bringing about a renaissance, and the formulation of a policy to create a 'national' architecture for the future. At another level, his commitment to reviving an indigenous style, had its roots in the prevalent intellectual atmosphere of the art circles which were then under the influence of what is generally called the Neo-Bengal School.²⁰

¹⁶ T.R. Metcalf, *op. cit.*, Chap. 4.

¹⁷ T.R. Metcalf, *op. cit.*, pp 121–129. The most important structure built by Jacob at Bikaner was the Lallgarh Palace.

¹⁸ S.C. Chatterjee, *Indian Arts and Industries*. Calcutta, 1934, p. 3

¹⁹ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. xxi.

²⁰ The Neo-Bengal School was the result of a unique partnership between E.B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore, to revive Indian art by going back to its roots. The main inspiration were the cave murals of Ajanta.

Artists and intellectuals derived inspiration from ancient painting, sculpture, mythology and history. It created great enthusiasm amongst young and old alike, and many experiments were carried out in technique and subject matter, specially in the field of painting.²¹ The atmosphere was one of historicity and revival when young intellectuals were enthusiastically discovering their past. Interest in ancient history was quickened by the archaeological discoveries at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and other places. A number of books on ancient architecture were also published around this time.²² His vision of ancient India derived from these books, and these visits to archaeological sites inspired him.... '(They) excited my imagination and enchanted my soul'.²³

His interest in history is evident throughout his writings and it is in the historic past that he sought to lay the foundation of the national architecture for the future. To him, ancient Magadha seemed to be the "fountain-head of Indian Arts and Crafts and Industry." He believed that Magadha had an unbroken development for 2000 years and created a unique building tradition of its own.²⁴ This tradition flowered in the various Magadhan capitals and spread to other areas in a comparatively undisturbed flow. He saw in many present day practices in construction, continuities with the past,²⁵ and was convinced that he could adopt to present times, the architectural inspiration of ancient Magadha.²⁶ The source of the revival having been decided, the next step was to awaken his readers to the glory of the past. This was attempted by a description of Magadha—not only its architecture, but also the life of the people in its urban centres—Rajgrha, Pataliputra and Nalanda. This method of explaining his architectural ideas against a background of historical description, was followed by him in all his works.²⁷

²¹ W.G. Archer, *India and Modern Art*, London, 1959, pp. 25–27.

²² Bibliographies in *Magadha and India and the New Order* list the following, among others: B.B. Dutt, *Town-Planning in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1925; B.M. Barua, *Gaya and Bodh Gaya*, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1934; *Bharhut III, Aspects of life and Art*, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1934; P.K. Acharya, Summary of the Manasara (though there is no such title, it was probably the synopsis attached to *Indian Architecture according to the Manasara Silpashastra*, 5 vols., Allahabad, 1927, by the same author); R.K. Mukherjee, *Hindu Civilization*, London, 1936; Sir J. Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, 3 vols., London, 1931; *Monuments of Sanchi*, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1940; A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Introduction to Indian Art*, Madras, 1913; E.B. Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, London, 1911; J. Fergusson, 'History of Indian Architecture. (sic) Probably, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*'. London, 1876; Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1915–1921, ed., Marshall, Calcutta.

²³ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. xvii.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xviii and p. 1.

²⁵ Some of the continuities he mentions are: The brick-jointing at Mohenjodaro, similar to the modern English bond; hidden stairways at Mohenjodaro like the ones found in Mewar palaces; pile-driving at Pataliputra similar to the present day practice etc. *Ibid.*, p. xix.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

²⁷ S.C. Chatterjee, *India and the New Order*, pp. 15–16 and 34–39; *Architects and Architecture*, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 5–7.

The descriptions, based mostly on literary sources and contemporary archaeological knowledge, are highly imaginative. They evoke a colourful, prosperous and idealistic past. Throughout, there is a feeling of romanticism, and an effort to bring out the picturesque, reminiscent of the writings of early nineteenth century English travellers of the Romantic Era.²⁸ Thus, two strands, the romantic vision, and the revivalist inspiration entwined to give meaning to his ideal of a 'national architecture'.

As a member of the Indian National Congress, he was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, and spoke approvingly of his spiritual-humanitarian ideas, and shared with him the view that villages must be regenerated and large industries curbed.²⁹ He blamed the political leaders for the communalism and provincialism then sweeping the country and believed that these destructive forces could be overcome only by returning to forgotten ideals. Political freedom could not be won without achieving cultural freedom. The slavish imitation of the West had to be stopped. He agreed with Havell's view that India would remain in intellectual and moral servitude unless her traditional art was revitalised.³⁰ In the article, 'Glory of Baranasi' he appealed for the preservation of the historic character of the city which was being destroyed by indiscriminate building activity.

The great revival however, was not meant to be simply an exercise in historicity. It was to be a renaissance which would combine modern technology with ancient tradition. Western technology and material efficiency had to be combined with the universal values of our ancient culture.³¹

It is clear that he approved of the Indo-Saracenic style, specially the work of John Begg. His harshest criticism was reserved for the 'ultra-modern' style which he felt was destroying the creativity of architects.³² He felt, that the new architecture of the West was being grafted on without assimilating its principles. This was unwholesome and dangerous for the nation because it was a surrender to the material culture of the West.³³ At a more practical level the modern structures which were built with imported materials deliberately popularised by official propaganda, were not as durable as old local materials, and certainly much more expensive. The massive import of such materials had not only made housing expensive for

²⁸ T.R. Metcalf, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

²⁹ S.C. Chatterjee, *India and New Order*, pp. 84 and 119. In this book there is a conjectural plate showing a village community hall built without imported materials 'as liked by Gandhiji', p. 141 and plate IV.

³⁰ S.C. Chatterjee, *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33 and *National Value of Indian Architecture*, Calcutta, 1933, pp. 1-5.

³¹ S.C. Chatterjee, *India and The New Order*, p. 3 and *Magadha*, p. 60.

³² By 'Ultra-modern' was obviously meant, the art-deco styles of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the 'International' or 'multi-storeyed' style which was being increasingly used after that.

³³ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. 60.

the middle-class, but was leading the country to 'economic disaster'.³⁴ In his appeals to use local materials and methods, Sris Chandra was really repeating the arguments used by Havell before him, but writing a few years later than Havell, he was aware of the difficulties of reviving the old methods completely. He advocated a synthesis between tradition and modern technology, for example, if stone was expensive in some areas then modern materials like artificial stone and reinforced concrete could be used on 'Indian-type structures'. He did not rule out 'assimilation of universal principles of art, and judicious application of a synthesis of these principles to developing Indian art and architecture',³⁵ but emphasised that '...tradition should be the legitimate basis of Indian architectural style ... (free India) must reassert her artistic and cultural individuality'.³⁶ The work of the modern trained engineer-architect was to put life into dead forms of styles which evolved in a society that has passed away—not jettison them completely.³⁷ The future Indian architecture should have both an aesthetic as well as a spiritual outlook. It was to be the base of a 'new civilization based on spiritual values'.³⁸

Sris Chandra gave a great deal of thought to the problem of planned housing and development in rural as well as urban areas. He was also aware of the work done in the field of planning in Europe and the U.S.A.,³⁹ but it was the Gandhian ideal which had stirred him the most. He was convinced that the migration from village to town, and the growing cultural alienation between them could only be stemmed by restoring economic equality between the two. Amenities like water supply, drainage, communications, medical aid and markets must be brought to the villages. 'Until and unless rural life is revitalised with its intellectual wealth, its material poverty and moral depravity cannot be wiped out. The regeneration of Indian nation (*sic*) is inextricably bound up with the regeneration of its villages. Scientific planning therefore should proceed from the village upwards'.⁴⁰ Though he praised the work of architects like Wright, Gropius and Le Corbusier he felt that their ideas were not in tune with Indian ways. For India, what was needed was 'one simple, social, economical, smoothly workable scheme'. Large irrigation projects were too expensive. Indian experts were very impressed by vast projects like the Tennessee Valley (T.V.A.) in U.S.A. A new India could not be created in a short time by copying wholesale the methods of Western industrialisation.⁴¹ Thus, long

³⁴ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. 68, and *National Value of Indian Architecture*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 30.

³⁵ S.C. Chatterjee, *India and the New Order*, p. 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33

³⁸ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. 60.

³⁹ He was definitely conversant with the work of Ebenezer Howard, as well as that of Patrick Geddes whom he quotes in *India and the New Order*. We find the following in the bibliography of this book, without the mention of the particulars of publication: P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*, London, 1949, E. Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, London, 1946.

⁴⁰ S.C. Chatterjee, *India and the New Order*, pp. 6-7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

before the present day controversy about big dams like the Tehri and Narmada Valley Projects, Sris was sounding an environmental warning.

He pleaded for the setting up of Schools of Regional Planning to train planners, architects, technicians and administrators who would work towards a 'comprehensive, self-sufficient plan that can judiciously fit together patterns of land use developed to modern standards and all rational items including communications, agricultural, industrial, commercial, social, cultural, sanitary and co-operative units'.⁴²

He proposed an organisational system for coordinating all planning. Briefly, he visualised the setting up of a Central Planning Board by an act of the legislature. This Board would appoint Regional Committees for planning regional schemes, which would in turn have to be approved by the Central Board. The Regional Committees would appoint local ones at town and village levels. Executive authorities would operate the planning schemes which would be projected by the Master Plan only in broad outline. He also visualised the full coordination and cooperation between universities, municipalities, local boards and P.W.D.s.⁴³ He advocated an early establishment of an All India Institute of Architecture and Regional Planning. This apex body would train students in the complex subject of 'National Planning' and its execution, as only well-planned cities and villages could regulate and elevate all aspects of Indian life.⁴⁴

For the training of both architects and planners, he recommended a holistic approach, training in the same institution architects, planners, artists and craftsmen. This institution (or Technical Education Centre as he called it) would liaise with the Engineering and Science College.⁴⁵ Future architects have to be trained not only in modern technology and techniques, but must also have a knowledge of 'Religion, Science, Mathematics and Fine Arts ... (all of which) contribute to elevate the soul of man and must be studied with other technical subjects by architect-engineers and planners.'⁴⁶

In the two syllabi which he helped to draft for Calcutta University and the Bengal Engineering College, Indian and Asian architectures were accorded great emphasis. Indian painting and sculpture were also included. Fifty per cent marks were to be reserved for the Indian portion of the course.⁴⁷ The study of Indian architecture would enable students to make

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75.

⁴⁴ Foreword by Dr. B.C. Roy in S.C. Chatterjee's *Architects and Architecture*, Calcutta, 1948, p. v.

⁴⁵ *India and the New Order* has a diagram explaining the coordinated subjects to be taught at this Technical Education Centre.

⁴⁶ S.C. Chatterjee, *Architects and Architecture*, p. 26.

⁴⁷ S.C. Chatterjee, *Indian Arts and Industries*, Calcutta, 1934, appendices A, B and C. Originally two separate courses were to be run, one at the University, and one at B.E. College. Ultimately however, only one course materialised.

designs which were rooted in our soil and tradition, and, therefore, would be more national. So far, according to him, architectural education had been west-oriented and anti-national. This was the main defect of the Bombay School. Its students spent nearly half their training period with foreign-trained architects who built only in the 'ultra-modern' style.⁴⁸ He harshly criticised the Indian Institute of Architects as well as the Bombay School. The former was controlled by chartered British architects who had no sympathy for, nor knowledge of Indian architecture or culture. The latter was formed, 'not with the object of resuscitating Indian traditional architecture, but for manufacturing draughtsmen to assist the British architects who have monopolised the building trade in India'.⁴⁹ The viceregal buildings of New Delhi were also criticised for their 'inconsistently composite architectural order, with incongruous juxtaposition of various styles (*sic*)'.⁵⁰ The planning of the new city of Delhi was criticised as disruptive and against democratic norms of equality. It had failed to stimulate healthy community life, because it segregated employees according to salaries. This plan, together with the non-availability of transport, made distances long, and daily life expensive for the common man.⁵¹

The efforts of Sris Chandra were remarkable for their energetic and singleminded pursuit of the goal. Through his articles, books and lectures, he brought before the public the necessity for such a movement, as well as the need for the correct training of architects. He set up on his own a small school where young architects would learn about Indian architecture, and where experiments could also be made in developing the allied arts and crafts.⁵²

For a brief period it seemed that his efforts might bear fruit. As a member of the National Planning Commission, and the Bengal Post-War Reconstruction Committee, he was able to put forward his views before influential people. On the occasion of the opening of his school he got messages of goodwill from a number of eminent people from India and abroad. These included John Begg, Sylvian Levi, Sten Konow, E. B. Havell, (then in England) and Jawaharlal Nehru, who arranged for him to deliver lectures at Allahabad.⁵³

Though it is a fact that no public statements were made by national

⁴⁸ S.C. Chatterjee, *Architects and Architecture*, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² It was known as 'Chatterjee's School of Architecture'. No other details regarding numbers of students, etc., are available. Most probably it was set up in his own house at 49, Malanga Lane, Calcutta.

⁵³ Though such formal messages need not be taken too seriously, they show that many eminent men were aware of his work and perhaps approved of his ideas.

leaders,⁵⁴ many individuals become interested in developing a national style, as well as cheaper housing. Around 1935, Rabindranath Tagore tried to develop a cheap waterproof material for rural housing, so that villagers could replace the expensive thatching with it. He built *Shyamali*, a traditional mud house which still stands. Its material was evolved after much experimentation, from a mixture of mud, cow-dung and coal-tar.⁵⁵

Practical support was as necessary as public enthusiasm. Even carrying on his school was getting to be difficult. He needed patrons—and the best type of patrons for his kind of endeavour were the local and municipal governments which had the funds to undertake large construction projects. If municipal and district boards could work in cooperation with the universities and engineering colleges, then a band of engineers, architects and artisans could be given practical training. Moreover, municipalities could start departments of 'Indian Architecture' (like that of water works and drainage). They could employ overseers, draughtsmen, craftsmen etc., who knew something about traditional design and method. Above all, some standard plans could be kept ready, presumably as models. Handbooks of such designs could be prepared, and even prefabricated parts like *jharokas* and *jaalis* could be made available to the public to reduce house-building costs.⁵⁶ If institutions like Calcutta Corporation could be converted, then a major victory would be won. Here he received some support from Subash Chandra Bose, who had been Mayor of Calcutta, and who suggested that the corporation should set up a department to give free advice to citizens, regarding traditional designs. It could also carry on propaganda to change public taste in favour of a 'national style'.⁵⁷ Shyamaprasad Mukherji, then Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, was very supportive. He had written the foreword for *Magadha*, and it was his interest that ultimately led to the introduction of a degree course in architecture at the University. It was as early as 1938, that Shyamaprasad had adopted the scheme for this course. There was some discussion on having another course at Bengal Engineering College. Sris Chandra and Percy Johnson Marshall, an English town planner, drew up the syllabi for two separate courses, one for architecture and one for planning. But the Second World War intervened, and the course could not be started. It was only after the war, that the degree course was begun at B.E. College and affiliated to Calcutta University.

The part of the syllabus drawn up by Sris Chandra, laid heavy emphasis on the study of Indian and Asian architecture. It appeared now that his

⁵⁴ This silence was criticised by Sris Chandra more than once. *National Value of Indian Architecture*, pp. 3–5; *Magadha*, p. 75.

⁵⁵ P.K. Mukhopadhyaya, *Rabindra Jiban Katha*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 224.

⁵⁶ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, pp. 77–78; *Indian Arts and Industries*, pp. 6–8.

⁵⁷ A suggestion that an avenue of houses exclusively in Indian styles be built, could not be implemented due to the legal difficulty of forcing individuals to build in a particular style.

dreams of training a band of young men to create a renaissance of national architecture might be fulfilled. As we shall see later, this, however was not to be.

As a part of the campaign to change popular taste, Sris Chandra also organised an All-India Architectural Arts and Crafts and Industries Exhibition at the Senate Hall, which became the base of a permanent museum later.

Calcutta Corporation did get some of its municipal structures built in Indian styles.⁵⁸ Central Avenue, an important project of the Improvement Trust (started in 1914 but continued for almost two decades) came to be lined along one short stretch, with private houses with facades in a style similar to that found in Rajasthan.⁵⁹

Some Vice-Chancellors, and a few Principals of Engineering Colleges became interested enough to desire to include Indian architecture in their curricula. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, then Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University asked Sris Chandra to frame a scheme for the revival of Indian Architecture, for the University; C.V. Raman appealed through the press for the subject to be taught widely in educational institutions.⁶⁰

Rajendra Prasad gave concrete support in the form of a commission to build the Congress Office (Congress National Hall) at Patna. Sris Chandra projected this building as a 'modern Indian structure in developed Gupta style (Two circular bastions) at either end of the facade were to be viewed as a monument of Hindu-Muslim cultural and political solidarity.'⁶¹ Its interior was to be decorated with murals from events in the lives of famous historical figures. Brass and bronze images, and ornamental woodwork would help to encourage local craft; thus the building would combine in itself, nationalistic goals, communal integration, and the encouragement of arts and crafts. It would be the model for the revival, combining spiritual and national values 'an appropriate symbol of the irresistible urge that has been agitating the minds of the national leaders to create and stimulate one unified Indian nation and Indian constructive nationalism. It will serve as a concrete expression of the dawn of Renaissance that has vibrated every cord of the nation's cultural activity'.⁶²

Other well-known structures designed by Sris Chandra, were the Hindu Mahasabha Bhavan and the Lakshmi-Narayan Temple of Birla, both at Delhi and the Birla Dharmasala at Sarnath. It is these structures that stand as examples of his work, and the translation of his ideas into brick and

⁵⁸ S C Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. xxiv.

⁵⁹ The avenue was to provide the main artery from North to South Calcutta, open up congested areas, and improve traffic flow. Plots on either side were sold to individuals at quite a high cost, for the times. Also see *The Central Avenue, in Bengal, Past and Present*, Calcutta, 1924.

⁶⁰ S.C. Chatterjee, *Indian Arts and Industries*, pp. 3-4.

⁶¹ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, p. 71.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

mortar. As to how successful his efforts were in blending indigenous style and modern method, and whether his designs fulfilled his own oft-repeated aesthetic standards, could be a matter of opinion.

Failure of the Movement

The problem was that nobody was quite sure as to which specific kind of structure, or combination of elements constituted a 'modern national style'. A truly modern yet national style could perhaps emerge only through an organic development over a period of time. Only then could a true synthesis occur between the traditional and the modern. The Indo-Saracenic architects had failed to build a lasting style mainly because their efforts were too conscious or deliberate. Sris Chandra could not fail to be influenced by this style, due to his background as Civil Engineer at Bikaner. His approach to design perhaps inevitably, was similar to those of the Indo-Saracenic architects like Swinton Jacob, Robert F. Chisholm and John Begg (whose work he admired). In their efforts to create an Indian style of British imperial architecture, these architects incorporated various forms and elements of medieval and regional architecture into their buildings in an eclectic manner, without much regard to chronology or style, though they rarely went further back than to the medieval structures.⁶³ Apart from the indiscriminate mixing of elements, the Indo-Saracenic also aspired to unite the indigenous with the modern; tradition and the grandeur and beauty of native styles with European science and modern functions.⁶⁴ Sris Chandra too, consciously and deliberately, chose elements from various traditional styles in an eclectic manner to create 'modern' and 'national' structures.

Whereas the designs of the Indo-Saracenic architects were meant to serve imperial ideology as it developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Sris Chandra's designs were to represent the growing nationalism at the beginning of this century. Communal harmony was also an important motive in the development of his designs. The source for his designs was ancient India (specially Magadha) rather than the medieval period. According to his own explanatory notes regarding his designs, we can see that he too, deliberately chose elements like sun windows from Ajanta, Vessara roofs from Rajgrha, pre-Gupta pillars, and put them together at random in his designs. To serve the purpose of communal harmony, even bastions from the Sher Shah period were added on to the design of the Hindu University at Varanasi.⁶⁵

⁶³ For example, Chisholm incorporated forms from the Saracenic, Byzantine and the local styles of Travancore and Ahmedabad; Jacob, from the Rajput and Mughal (Shah Jehan period); and Begg from Bijapur and Ahmedabad. See T.R. Metcalf, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-66; p. 96 and p. 124.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77

⁶⁵ See S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, pp. 70-71 and 82-88. Explanatory notes on the Hindu University and Siva-Vishnu temple.

Sris Chandra criticised the viceregal buildings at New Delhi for their 'inconsistently composite architectural order with incongruous juxtaposition of various styles occidental and oriental, which when seen as a whole destroy architectural unity, aesthetic harmony and balance.'⁶⁶ Whatever be the validity of this criticism against the individualistic and highly acclaimed creation of Lutyens, one cannot avoid the fact that Sris Chandra's own designs were themselves made up of a 'juxtaposition of styles'. This lack of both a clear concept of what constitutes 'national' architecture, and originality of style was perhaps an important factor in the failure of the movement.

His smaller structures were more successful. The designs for 'simple house' and 'modest house' have an uncluttered and well-balanced look.⁶⁷ One of the private residences on Central Avenue designed by him, was a successful experiment with a traditional plan.⁶⁸ Built around a square courtyard with overhanging verandahs on the inside, it had a facade comprising a terraced portico, balconies, *jaalis*, *chhajjas* and a large *chhatra*. All modern amenities were provided, and the windows were large and fitted with venetian blinds. It was airy and cool and proved his point that traditionally planned houses need not be 'dark' or 'insanitary' and could be adapted to modern urban conditions easily.⁶⁹

His conjectural plan for a model village of 3,000 people, was based on the traditional *chaturmukh* model.⁷⁰ It also took care of the specifications laid down by the report of the Indian Planning Committee on rural housing, regarding civil amenities to be expected in future villages. The plan shows a central temple, a community hall, social training centre, radio, patrol station (*sic*), fire brigade, police chowki, school, industrial workshops, welfare centre, wells, tanks, and interestingly, a museum and a military training centre.⁷¹ Conjectural designs were also made for village housing, satellite, 'mini' and industrial townships.⁷²

Sris Chandra's ideas on rural and urban planning, were never put into practice. His dream, that municipal boards and universities should join hands to save Indian architecture from extinction, did not materialise. Likewise, the hope that the National Hall at Patna would inspire a renaissance, remained unfulfilled. Though as Chairman of the Planning Committee, Jawaharlal Nehru agreed to his suggestions and the committee recommended the 'regeneration and re-adaptation' of Indian traditions and method,

⁶⁶ S.C. Chatterjee, *Architects and Architecture*, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁷ S.C. Chatterjee, *Magadha*, Plates XX and XXII.

⁶⁸ 232, Central Avenue (Chittaranjan Avenue), designed for Sri Keshub Chandra Gupta—now unrecognisably altered.

⁶⁹ S.C. Chatterjee, *National Value of Indian Architecture*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 8.

⁷⁰ Square or rectangular in plan, with an entrance at the middle of each side.

⁷¹ S.C. Chatterjee, *India and the New Order*, Plate II and Plate IV.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 89-95.

ultimately it was Jawaharlal himself, who was instrumental in the decision to build Chandigarh in the 'International' style of Le Corbusier.

This gave the Public Works Department of independent India the impetus to adopt the industrial technology and expensive materials which have increased costs and reduced the 'International' style to a dreary and unimaginative one. Even the syllabus of the B.E. College course was changed soon after it started, when foreign experts were called in for advice. With necessary changes in technical training gaining more importance, the study of Indian architecture was de-emphasised.⁷³ With the fast growth of the cement and reinforced concrete industries, young architects were increasingly attracted to these materials. All this, together with the ebbing of the brief public interest in traditional architecture and its growing enthusiasm for high-technology 'modernism', led to the virtual death of the incipient movement. Thus ended Sris Chandra's quest for a renaissance of national architecture in India.

⁷³ I am indebted to Sri Dhrubajyoti Sen, Architect for this information.

Book Reviews

V.B. ATHREYA, G. DJURFELDT and S. LINDBERG, *Barriers Broken: Production Relations and Agrarian Change in Tamil Nadu*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, 335 pp., Rs. 250.

This book deals with the interesting and important theme of socioeconomic change in agrarian India, and is based on a survey, conducted in 1979–80, of 367 households in six villages of Tiruchi district, Tamil Nadu. A distinction that is central to the book is that between 'wet' and 'dry' villages. The wet areas are characterised by intensive agriculture on canal-irrigated land as compared to the dry areas where irrigation is less extensive and tank and groundwater sources predominate. Variations in the agrarian economy are related to differences in the nature of irrigation. While the broad distinction serves a useful analytical role, it should be noted that 'dry' villages also had a significant irrigated sector, which accounted for 46 per cent of cultivated area. This degree of irrigation is greater than the average for Tamil Nadu, and suggests that the wet-dry characterisation may be a misnomer.

An examination of the strikingly different distributions of land in the two ecotypes shows that the wet area was characterised by a higher degree of inequality in land-ownership than the dry area (Gini coefficients would have been useful here). An important methodological bias of the authors' survey, the implications of which are not examined in any detail, derives from the systematic screening-out of non-agricultural households. This is likely to affect several aspects of the village economy, particularly the overall distribution of resources.

Using information on currently owned and inherited land of the surveyed households, the authors examine patterns of mobility in the distribution of landholdings. By drawing a Lorenz curve for inherited land, the authors make the mistake of aggregating data over different years as the year of inheritance does not refer to a unique time period (but to an unspecified number of years).¹ It is thus incorrect to create a distribution of 'inherited' land and conclude from the distributions of current and 'inherited' land-

¹ This has also occurred in other studies such as D.W. Attwood, 'Why Some of the Poor Get Richer: Economic Change and Mobility in Rural Western India', *Current Anthropology*, 20, 3, 1979.

holdings that there has been a 'deconcentration of landholdings' (p. 109) over time.

Nevertheless, it is feasible and interesting to examine the mobility, upward or downward, experienced by individual households between the time of their inheritance and the survey of 1979–80. The pattern of absolute mobility, what is termed gross mobility by the authors,² shows interesting variations across ecotypes with greater mobility in the dry area. The least mobile group comprised households that inherited no land in the wet area. By contrast, in the dry area, 69 per cent of households that inherited no land had gained some land by 1979–80. To understand these complex patterns of change, and in particular the land-gain in the dry villages, some disaggregation of 'inheritance' by time period would have been useful. Based solely on evidence on the distribution of current land holdings, the hypothesis that the 'polarization effects of new technology are not visible in our material' (p. 125) remains untested.

The study of labour relations focuses on two types of labour: hired labour and family labour. Within hired labour, using qualitative information, the authors draw out the distinctions between permanent farm servants, casual labourers, hired on a daily basis, and contract gang workers, employed for specific operations and paid a piece–wage rate. There are two bases for categorisation here that need to be clearly demarcated. These are: (a) the duration of labour hire (long-term versus short-term) and (b) the form of wage payment (piece rate versus time rate). While the development of contract labour signals a shift from time-to-time piece–wages, this does not by itself suggest the growth of 'semi-attached' labourers (p. 142).³

Most of the large-scale surveys that are reported in official sources of data classify households by size categories of landholdings and operational holdings. Athreya, Djurfeldt and Lindberg recognise that such a classification can be put to very limited use, and an important part of their book is a chapter on methods of identifying socioeconomic classes in the countryside, using data from the survey villages. The authors have proposed a new index of the class status of households, one based on what they have called the surplus criterion. The index is, in essence, a very detailed assessment of household income in relation to subsistence requirements, and is very demanding in terms of the data required to compute it. It requires detailed data on costs of production, output, marketing, loans, employment and consumption. The authors contrast their index with a modified version of the index of class status developed by Utsa Patnaik.⁴

² This is to be distinguished from patterns of relative mobility that cannot be examined with the available data.

³ For example, a casual worker, paid a daily wage, employed by the same employer throughout the year may be more 'attached' than a contract worker.

⁴ In contradistinction to the Athreya *et al*, index, Patnaik's index defines class status on the basis of data on the relations of exploitation—in particular, in terms of the labour and rent relations—into which households enter in the process of production.

The authors have put together valuable material on indebtedness and argue that state intervention has led to the decline of usury. Evidence for this includes the fact that over one-half the total volume of credit in both areas came from institutional sources of credit and the mean rate of interest paid by a household was 18 and 20 per cent per annum in the wet and dry areas respectively.⁵ While these data undoubtedly signal the penetration of cheap credit into rural markets, further research on interest rates by source and over time is needed to delineate changes within the informal sector.

A presentational flaw that occurs frequently in the book is that in most places there are no statistical tables, with the result that numbers must be deduced from bar charts. This makes it difficult to derive exact figures. The book should also have been edited more carefully.

In conclusion, this book represents a useful and thought-provoking attempt to relate the rich complexity of life in contemporary agrarian India to long-debated theoretical issues, and in particular to explore empirically concepts that appear in the Marxist literature.

Madhura Swaminathan

MIT Centre for International Studies
Cambridge, U.S.A.

JAN BREMAN, *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, 339 pp., Rs. 175.

During the nineteenth century the west European capitalists set up large-scale plantations in their South and Southeast Asian colonies to grow highly profitable and export-oriented commercial crops like tobacco, coffee, rubber, sugar and tea. Most of these plantations were set up in sparsely populated regions and were labour intensive in nature. This necessitated the mobilisation of a very large-scale workforce from other populous areas within the colonies and to overseas colonies. In recent years a growing number of social scientists, interested in South and South-East Asian studies, have been engaged in studying various aspects related to migration, production organisation, and labour relations in these plantations. The result of their labour has created an impressive literature, both published and unpublished, on the subject. The work under review is the latest and a very valuable contribution to this body of literature. Prof. Jan Breman has written this book about the plantation system in Sumatra's east coast during Dutch colonial rule.

⁵ This refers to the average interest rate paid by a borrower household on its entire portfolio of loans. Estimates of mean interest rates, weighted by the size of the loan, would have been useful here.

Prof. Breman is well-known in India for his excellent studies on different aspects of social change in Gujarat agrarian society. An accidental discovery of a long suppressed report of an investigating colonial official J.C.T. Rhemrev, revealing the wretched working and living conditions of immigrant workers on the plantations in Sumatra's east coast, motivated him to write this book. The study is based on information derived from published and unpublished Dutch archival material including colonial documents; contemporary accounts, pamphlets and newspapers; secondary works and collection of fantastically revealing photographs on plantation life. With the combined skills of an anthropologist and historian, the author has used these sources to analyse the nature of social organisation dominated by European planters, peculiarities of labour relations and the role of the colonial state in the whole process.

Starting with the involvement of the individual European entrepreneur, the tobacco plantations on Sumatra's east coast soon came under the control of European corporate companies during 1860s and 1870s. The Deli Company was the first limited liability company set up in 1869 and it emerged as one of the largest plantation companies by the end of the nineteenth century. The interesting feature of these companies in the colonial context was their monopoly over tobacco cultivation as well as its marketing in the international market. Plantations grew rapidly and so did the demand for labour. Unable to force the local peasantry to work in the plantations as wage labour the planters imported Chinese labour in large numbers. The Chinese labour was further supplemented by Indian, Javanese and Thai workers. By the end of the nineteenth century the plantations in this area employed more than one hundred thousand immigrant workers.

Prof. Breman has highlighted the peculiarities which marked the process of labour recruitment and nature of labour relations. The planters recruited Chinese labour through middlemen and a recruiting agency was established in China for this purpose. From the very beginning fraudulent and coercive means were often used to recruit labour for the plantations. After arrival the immigrants were employed under the obnoxious indenture contract. The colonial state legalised these contracts through the enactment of penal laws and the Coolie Ordinance. Extra economic coercion rather than wage incentive emerged as the characteristic feature of labour control in these plantations. Indebtedness and bondage, freedom of mobility, inhuman and unhealthy living and working conditions, widespread contagious diseases and consequent high mortality were some of features revealed in Breman's account of labour life in the plantations.

The social organisation set-up within the plantations, according to Breman, was based on a hierarchical structure dominated at the top by the white planters and the labour at the bottom. The labour force was subjected to to 'discipline' through the intermediaries in this hierarchy such as the

junior European assistant managers, Asian foremen and the clerks. The strictly hierarchical organisation entailed unconditional obedience at all levels permitting the disciplining of the 'coolies' to begin with. Breman refers to an earlier study of Lilly Clerk based on belletristic sources showing the nature of power relationship among the management hierarchy. Breman argues that this plantation system was arranged along military lines in which the workforce was subjected to extremely rigid regimentation both at the work place and their living quarters. Thus the whole organisation was geared to maintain a strict social control over the workforce. In the process of systematically 'disciplining' and 'dehumanizing' the labour force, the white planters often displayed the worst form of racist violence against the immigrant workers. Within this social organisation the planters wielded enormous powers and exercised extra-legal authority when dealing with the labour force. Intimidation, corporal punishment, imprisonment and torture formed successive gradations of a more general pattern in the uncontrolled exercise of power which characterised relations between planters and workers. Some of the photographs reproduced in the book showing the workers in chain and being flogged reveal the most barbaric and brutal aspects of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.

The colonial state provided legitimacy to the 'enslavement' of immigrant workforce by according legal status to the indenture system. The Coolie Ordinance was also meant for the 'protection' of workers. But Breman shows that because of the racial and social affinities between the planters and the colonial officials, the 'protection' clauses were never implemented. On the contrary the colonial bureaucracy made conscious efforts to hide or ignore abuses on the plantations. However, such efforts were not always successful. The local press often reported all manner of abuse on plantations. The most damaging exposure came from J. Van den Brand, a socialist lawyer, whose pamphlet 'The Millions from Deli', published in 1902, caused a sensation in the Netherlands. The scandal of 'coolie abuse' became a major political issue among the ruling and opposition political groups in the Netherlands which forced the Government in 1903 to order Public Prosecutor J.L. Rhemrev to inquire into Brand's allegations. Rhemrev submitted his report in 1904 confirming the validity of Brand's allegations. Analysing the nature of reactions to the Rhemrev report at the highest political level in the Netherlands, Breman exposes the double standards adopted in relation to the colonial situation. Compelled to acknowledge the prevalence of labour abuse and that the labour relations were not even in accordance with the law on the plantations, the apologists of the system argued that the situation should not be judged according to 'standards applicable in Europe'. The political clout wielded by the highly organised plantation companies at home and the defensive attitude of the authorities were factors, according to Breman, which led to the suppression of the Rhemrev report. And despite

the exposure of abuses, the penal laws were not repealed and the sufferings of the immigrant labour continued.

How did the labour force react to such plantation regime? Breman asserts that the very nature of social organisation and the way in which 'disciplining' of labour was organised imposed severe constraints on the solidarity of workers. 'Internalization of dependency caused feelings of despondency which adversely affected the resistance of workers'. Lack of collective resistance, however, did not mean that the labour suffered their subjugation and exploitation passively. The workers put up resistance in various forms ranging from passive resistance at workplace to desertion and violence against managerial staff. The labour resistance aspects, however, have received far less attention in this book despite the author's awareness of their significance to his own framework. Moreover the question of wages has been dealt in a very limited manner. A detailed statistical analysis of wages on the plantations is completely missing.

Rana P. Behal

Deshbandhu College
University of Delhi

MICHAEL COULSON, *Mālātī Mādhavam*, (critical edition, revised by Roderick Sinclair), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, lxi+278 pp., Rs. 225.

Bhavabhūti's *Mālātī Mādhavam*, is a folk tale of love and intrigue to which *vīra*, *bhayānaka* and *vibhatsa rasas* lend a distinct flavour.

Michael Coulson, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Edinburgh University, prepared a critical edition of *Mālātī Mādhavam* as his doctoral thesis presented at the University of Oxford. Twenty years later, his work has been revised by Roderick Sinclair of Balliol College, Oxford.

Coulson and Sinclair's work is divided into three parts—introduction, text with a critical apparatus and notes. To take the text part first, the introduction claims that an extensive search for manuscripts was carried out in India, Nepal and England. The critical apparatus has been prepared on the basis of fourteen manuscripts written in different scripts. However, even a cursory glance at the apparatus shows that most of the variants are too trivial to have any substantial effect on the meaning of a given passage.

In the notes prepared by Coulson and revised by Sinclair, one finds justifications for readings preferred. Here one finds several discrepancies. The text suggests one reading but in the notes one finds preference being given to another reading. This has happened probably because Coulson himself made several alterations in his notes and second, Sinclair revised and rewrote much of what Coulson had written. In this process both failed to revise the text in the light of their fresh preferences.

At a few places the choice of readings can be questioned. In I.28.5 'parivārām' is read as qualifying 'gajavadhūm.' In the given context, reference is to a royal maiden going on an elephant along with an army (*parivāra*) of attendants and guards. It is only appropriate to say that attendants and guards were from the maiden's entourage and not the elephant's.

The introduction contains a wealth of information about Bhavabhūti especially the identification of Kālpi as Kālapriyā on Rajshekhar's evidence is significant. An interesting theory vigorously pursued is that Bhavabhūti carried out several improvements and corrections in the text. This is borne out by the fact that at several places different readings are supported by an equally large number of manuscripts. This proves at least one thing, that Bhavabhūti's plays were so popular that performers eagerly waited for his new script and used to present his plays even as the author made further improvements on the basis of those presentations.

Coulson and Sinclair's edition is also significant from the point of view of the special punctuation marks they have employed to show the elements of *sandhi* and *samāsa*. Their method of marking *bahuvrihi* with subordinate clauses, in which each component is distinctly shown is particularly useful in understanding Bhavabhūti's contrived and complicated compounds.

However, being a critical edition it can have only a limited readership. And further, the entire text of the play is in the Roman script. Sanskrit texts published in India in the Roman script cannot expect to attract many readers.

Ashutosh Dayal Mathur
St. Stephen's College
University of Delhi

CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, *Life Among Indian Tribes : The autobiography of an anthropologist*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, vii + 186 pp. + plates, Rs. 190.

Professor Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf today is the most prolific anthropologist who has to his credit half a century of research in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. He is still active. As soon as the author of this review completed his review of his autobiography, another book by Professor Haimendorf on the Tibetans in India was brought to his notice. The professor has plans for the restudy of many tribes and for a revisit to tribal territories, and his enthusiasm for anthropological research is infectious. In his autobiography he seeks to present an overview of the greater part of the field studies he had conducted and to introduce the readers to the

life of some of the most primitive hunters and food gatherers in the western wooded hills of Deccan as well as to the more advanced farming societies in open plains where tribal populations dovetail with groups of traditional caste societies. He also seeks to familiarise the reader with the task of an anthropologist engaged in analysing the nature and structure of the society encountered for the first time.

Born in Vienna in July 1909, in a family of scholars including orientalist, his decision to study anthropology was due to accidental contacts with scholars engaged in the study of non-European societies. The Vienna school of ethnology known for its historical approach to preliterate civilisations also exercised its influence on him. However, it was in London that he came in contact with the leading lights of the functionalist school which deeply influenced him, and with colonial administrators working in tribal areas of India. He descended on the tribal world of India after spending a few days as a guest of the Viceroy in Shimla. He started his anthropological career with the study of the Konyaks in the Northeast which he later published as a full monograph. In the 1930s the Konyaks could be described as naked Nagas. He returned to London to get married and came back to India when the Second World War broke out. As a German national he was permitted to stay in the Nizam's Hyderabad and he used the war years to study the three tribes, the Chenchus whom he described as jungle folk of the Deccan, the Reddis and the Raj Gonds. All the three tribes have now full length monographs by the professor. What is presented in this piece is a personalised account of travel and other experiences. The Chenchus were a very primitive group; the Reddis were in the clutches of moneylenders and timber merchants. However, it was among the Raj Gond that Professor Haimendorf spent the longest time. As he says, it was the most demanding and rewarding experience of his as an anthropologist. The Raj Gond society was highly complex; it was feudalised and partly Hinduised but it retained, even in those days, a great deal of autonomy. The professor was lucky in having informants who could help him in recording the myths of the Raj Gond. One wonders what would have happened if the professor had first visited the territory of the northern Gond instead of studying the southern Gond. The northern Gonds were the more acculturated while the southern ones preserved a great deal of their pristine culture which has been recorded for the benefit of the readers. In between he also visited Orissa and left a delightful account of the tribes in Koraput based on his wife's diaries. In January 1944 he was appointed Special Officer of the Northeast Frontier by the Government of India. He studied the Apa Tanis and the neighbours for almost a year and published a report on his expeditions among these people. The Government of India decided not to send out any other expeditions and the professor returned to Hyderabad this time in his capacity as Adviser to His Highness, of Nizam's Government

for tribes and backward classes. It was around this period that the Congress ministries had instituted detailed inquiries into the conditions of the tribes and undertaken the first set of measures for the welfare and protection of these people. Independently of this, Professor Haimendorf was instrumental in instituting a number of measures for the protection of the tribals' interests, the most important of which was the issue of *pattas* to tribal cultivators for 160,000 acres by 1946. He returned to academic life and built up the Department of Oriental and African Studies and encouraged and guided a whole generation of anthropologists from India. He continued his study of tribal communities of India and of the castes and communities including the Sherpas in Nepal. After 1946 when he retired from the Chair of Asian Anthropology he devoted himself to further fieldwork in India in old Hyderabad areas, Arunachal Pradesh and so on and observed with dismay the dismantling of the protective measures that he had undertaken as Adviser to the Nizam's Government and the swamping of the tribal areas by aliens from Maharashtra and other parts of Andhra Pradesh. However, he has not lost his hope for the tribals engaged in the struggle for survival; his optimism rests on the work of the social activists who speak up for the rights of the tribals and the vigilant media. Richly illustrated like all his other books, this autobiography is a befitting climax to a lifelong work among the tribals of India.

K.S. Singh

Anthropological Survey of India
New Delhi

KATHLEEN GOUGH, *Rural Social Change in Southeast India 1950s to 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, xix + 578 pp., Rs. 175.

This book is a treatise on the economic and political changes in Thanjavur during the decades spanning the fifties to the eighties. It is based on anthropological fieldwork carried out in 1976, when Gough revisited Kumbapettai and Kirippur, which she had originally studied in depth during 1951–53. It successfully combines the social anthropologist's insights based on first hand knowledge of a community with a political economist's understanding of the dynamics of larger structural change.

Some of the significant factors contributing to changes in Thanjavur's villages during this period were the Community Development and National Extension Programmes; a series of land reform legislations; and the Green Revolution. Both Kumbapettai and Kirippur had new roads, electric lamps and protected drinking water supply, and new elementary schools had come up. In both villages, the only tangible benefit derived from land reforms was land granted as house sites and for cultivation to the landless

Harijans. Tenancy reforms had resulted in large-scale eviction from land of cultivating tenants. The Green Revolution had increased income disparities between the small and large farmers, and increased concentration as well as centralisation of land-ownership. It had, on the whole, led to general impoverishment of the people of Kumbapettai and Kirippur.

The eviction of tenants and the impoverishment of the small and middle peasants had combined with population increase to swell the ranks of agricultural wage labourers. Another contributing factor was the near total cessation of weaving among the Sengunda Mudaliar weavers of Kirippur. Wage labourers with land, non-existent in 1952, now formed nearly 4 per cent of agricultural wage labourers in both the villages. Again, unlike before, *Pannaiyals* or attached labourers had become a rare category and casual labour was the most prevalent form of employment of wage labour.

Gough's discussion of the changes in caste-class interlinkages is rather cursory. Her own observations found in many places throughout the study, and the data presented by her, permit a more extensive discussion of this complex issue than the author has chosen to provide.

A further analysis of tables presented in the book by this reviewer reveals a much more complex caste-class interlinkage in the two villages than earlier. Both Kumbapettai and Kirippur have witnessed loss of wealth among the traditionally dominant caste Brahmins and Vellalars and the emergence of middle castes in the agrarian hierarchy, a phenomenon observed in many other regions. What is more interesting is the gains made by Harijans, however insignificant these may be in terms of proportions. Instances of upward mobility among some Harijans has raised expectations of future prosperity among other members of the caste.

The relationship between castes had also undergone dramatic changes during the twenty-four year period between Gough's visits. Brahmins no longer held the monopoly of force. Higher castes were not clearly aligned on one side against the middle castes and Harijans. Caste-based exercise of control and power had been considerably eroded and power was exercised more through votes, and dispensation of development projects. Untouchability was not practised openly any more. Universal franchise had given the Harijans a sense of power based on numerical strength.

On the one hand, then, is the changed power equations between castes. On the other, impoverishment and dispossession of the peasantry has led to exacerbation of class antagonisms. Together, these have created a number of difficulties in the organisation of agricultural wage labourers as a class.

First of all, with demographic pressure on the increase, there is little hope for land acquisition. This has resulted in extreme hostility between middle caste and Harijan wage labourers. Examples have been cited of landlords stirring up disputes among members of the lower castes to keep them divided and to avoid confrontation on issues such as eviction of tenants.

Second, unlike before, a significant proportion of both landowners and wage labourers are often drawn from the same castes. This has happened in Kirippur in the case of the middle castes, and to a smaller extent in Kumbapettai, where there are middle caste and Harijan landowners who employ wage labour. This makes conflicting demands on the loyalty of wage workers employed by landowners of the same caste. Gough observes the absence of sympathy among middle caste members for the mass-killing of Harijans in Kilvenmani, and the role of middle caste wage labourers as 'scabs' during wage struggles by Harijans in Kirippur.

Also, wage labourers are now divided into three distinct groups: those who have recently acquired marginal holdings; those whose holdings have become marginal, forcing their entry into wage labour; and those who have always been landless labourers. The consciousness of these three groups is likely to vary considerably. It is the Harijans who constitute the first and last categories, while the middle castes belong to the second. Thus, the divide is not only of caste but also of aspirations and interests.

Gough holds the communist movement's incorrect strategy and leadership largely responsible for the lack of progress in the struggle of the agrarian poor. While this may be true, the factors underlined above are likely to have contributed considerably to the difficulties of organising the agrarian proletariat.

This book is not only a valuable contribution to the study of rural social change, but also one which presents it from the perspective of the lower strata of society. Concern for the working people of Thanjavur is evident throughout the study. This has always been the hallmark of all Gough's work, as is her untailing optimism in the ultimate victory of class struggle. Her untimely demise earlier this year leaves a void that will be felt for a long time to come.

T.K. Sundari

Centre for Development Studies
Trivandrum

RAMACHANDRA GUHA, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, xxii+214 pp., Rs. 175.

This innovative and harmonious monograph is, the author says, not the work of a historian, but of a sociologist trying to write history. However that may be, the published work is that of a full-blown historian, belonging to that rare species which is perfectly at home in the field of sociological theory. Guha professes to reject both the purely interpretive approach of cultural anthropology and the reductionist stance of materialistic (and

especially ecological) determinism, while trying to weld in a pertinent fashion the material and the symbolic in sociological explanation. By so doing, he sets a very promising standard for research to come in the field of Indian ecological history.

One of the best ideas of the book is the area selected for study. The main reason for the choice of Uttarakhand (i.e., the northern hill districts of Uttar Pradesh) is of course that it was the birthplace of the now world-famous Chipko movement. But another interesting feature of the region is that it consisted before Independence, notwithstanding its economic and cultural homogeneity, of two distinct territories, namely the princely state of Tehri Garhwal, ruled by a very ancient dynasty, and the Kumaun Division of British India. The book accordingly recounts the story of the century of environmental destruction and popular resistance which culminated in the celebrated Chipko *andolan* of the late 1970s and its sequels. But the narrative is conducted within the framework of a more ambitious theoretical object, which the author defines as a comparative analysis of 'the links between structures of domination and the idioms of social protest' (p.7), the patterns of authority here concerned being the 'traditional' monarchic setup of Tehri Garhwal on the one hand, and the 'modern bureaucratic' colonial state on the other. Thus, while the environmental determinants of peasant insurgency in Uttarakhand are fully discussed, the book also provides the Indianist reader of Barrington Moore, Gluckman, Filly, Skocpol and others with precisely what he is looking for, namely solid monographic enquiries that serve to test the prevailing general hypotheses against the realities of the Indian case.

While describing the class-structure of the mountain people and their cultural 'ecology', Guha adopts the classical functionalist stance which presents mountain societies as generally egalitarian and bound by strong communal ties owing to the heavy ecological constraints to which they have to adapt, which hamper the generation of economic surplus and the process of class differentiation. Traditionally, Guha says, caste rules in Uttarakhand were lax and village communities were democratic (although only the 'clean' castes had a decisive say in the panchayats). These communal traditions, in turn, exerted considerable influence on the idiom of peasant protest, which was as a rule unanimous and moderate in its aims and means. Ecological constraints also played their part in shaping religion and folklore, which gave institutional sanction to informal forest conservancy practices such as the protection of sacred groves. With the advent of state forestry and large-scale commercial exploitation of timber, this coherent and balanced relationship between the peasant communities and their forests was shattered, not only because access to the forests was dramatically restricted, but also because the state no more recognised communal ownership, but only individual rights of user, thus initiating the trend

towards the atomisation of society which is the hallmark of capitalist alienation.

Peasant agitation against state forestry, both in Tehri Garhwal and in Kumaun, drew its legitimacy from custom, and was not intended to revolutionise the existing social order. Its object was to suppress the unprecedented incursions of the state in the everyday life of the peasants, and its encroachments upon customary privileges, which were considered as breaches of the moral code of relationship between ruler and ruled, between *raja* and *praja*. In Tehri Garhwal, the peasants professed until the end their conviction that the quasi-divine monarch was on their side against his oppressive employees. In Kumaun, conversely, the colonial state was early rejected as illegitimate, and popularly equated with a demonic *raj* and the kingdom of Ravan. In both cases, however, the agitation was mostly non-violent, as it had been in the past. This, the author argues, was not due to any blind or helpless attachment on the part of the peasants to outdated and useless forms of collective action, but represented a shrewd tactical use of traditional ways of protest which were adapted to the geographical and political context of the struggles. A central argument of the book is that all ideologies of power leave room for an implicit ideology of legitimate resistance, and that 'forms of domination structure forms of resistance' (p. 98). Consequently, from the late 1930s onwards, with the spread of the nationalist movement and the growth of market economy in the countryside, peasant agitations became more massive and widespread, and tended to shift from traditional to more direct confrontational resistance. This reflected the peasants' ability to adapt their modes of protest to the changing context of power. At no time, Guha adds, did the 'subalterns' protest merge with nationalist agitation or serve as a mere tool in the hands of urban politicians. If anything, it is the peasants of Uttarakhand who used Congress militancy to further their own ends, and they eventually met with a considerable amount of success.

When viewed against this background, the Chipko movement ceases to appear in the somewhat mythological light with which it has been surrounded by militant ecological literature, which has popularised it rather romantically as the archetypal model of third world environmental movements. Reductionist interpretations of this movement as feminist or Gandhian also clearly miss the point, even though they do carry a certain amount of truth. These stereotypes obscure the fact that Chipko is only one (admittedly the most organised) in a long series of peasant (and not specifically environmental) upsurges; that ecological awareness in Uttarakhand had existed long before its outbreak; and that the idiom of resistance it uses, strikes deep roots in the locally prevailing ideology of the relationship between ruler and ruled. In the context of the continuing onslaught of commercial forestry in contemporary India, and indeed all over the world, the magnificently successful Chipko *andolan* cannot but be cited as a model

of efficient popular response. But Guha's careful sociohistorical analysis helps us to understand how materially and culturally specific the ingredients of this victory are to Uttarakhand: homogeneous communities of peasant proprietors with a long record of resolute non-violent resistance to oppression, and situated in difficult mountainous surroundings (which furthermore happen to be one of the holiest regions of the Hindu world), of course stand a better chance of success, when confronted to the modern Indian state, than most of the intensely hierarchic and class-ridden peasantries of the subcontinent.

Comparative analysis on a worldwide scale (a genre at which Guha excels) also helps to place the Uttarakhand agitations in proper perspective. These movements have resembled in many fundamental ways the forest conflicts which occurred in Europe during the transition to industrial capitalism. In both cases, in particular, economic and symbolic factors appear to have been closely intertwined, and the peasants' risings in defence of the free access to biomass resources were also, at root, a matter of conflicting world-views. But the simile, the author warns, cannot be pushed further. Forest conflicts have gradually disappeared in Europe as capitalism came of age, while they still go on in third world countries, where capitalism has been imposed from without as an extractive process, and has jeopardised finely tuned and ecologically balanced systems of production without replacing them. In this context, Guha goes on to say, Chipko does not represent a mere backward looking movement, or the last convulsion of a condemned social order, but 'one of the most innovative responses to the ecological and cultural crisis of modern society', a statement which breaks drastically with the theme of the proletarian vanguard.

The book could probably have grappled more explicitly with the theoretical questions which the author poses at the outset concerning the causality of social protest. The announced fusion of Marxian and Weberian discourses on this point is effected in a matter of fact way in the course of the work, but without much discussion of its underlying implications. More generally, the reader, in the end, is left to wonder where the author exactly stands regarding the fundamental debate of ecological anthropology which concerns the antecedence of nature over culture in the shaping of societies. But these remarks stem from the fact that ambitious studies raise ambitious questions. They do not detract from the value of a book which must be hailed as the first full-scale monograph in the field of Indian ecological history, and which brings at once in this little explored field of study a kind of intellectual fluency and alertness which future researchers will often find difficult to equal.

Jacques Pouchepadass
French Institute
Pondicherry

ZOYA HASAN, *Dominance and Mobilisation: Rural Politics in Western Uttar Pradesh 1930-1980*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, 195 pp., Rs. 175.

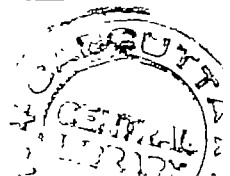
The political process in India has been influenced by interplay of socio-economic forces. A number of studies have come up to analyse these interactions of socioeconomic and political forces and the implications for the political economy of India. This book sets out to have a deeper and more analytical understanding of the subject based on primary data mainly.

The author examines the socioeconomic structure of Aligarh district of Western Uttar Pradesh. While doing so she throws light on patterns of caste and class dominance in Aligarh district. The author observes that there is a vertical trend in the power structure of Aligarh district with the political parties changing the pattern of political mobilisation to maintain the hierarchical structure. The net outcome is reinforcement of unequal social structure.

The author has approached the subject in a very comprehensive manner. She goes into the evolution of agrarian relations in Aligarh during the British period. The initial Congress Party enthusiasm to bring about changes in ownership pattern of land and technology to be used in agriculture did not bear much fruit. It led to the emergence of a new class in the agrarian sector. But the vertical nature of the power structure has remained the same. The emergence of rich peasantry as a result of the introduction of the Green Revolution necessitated newer patterns of political mobilisation. The newer situations created a void in the political process which implied the emergence and strengthening of the base of other political parties like the Bharatiya Lok Dal, later Lok Dal, in Uttar Pradesh, which in turn implied that the pendulum of electoral destiny of political parties also has been swinging. The fact, however, remained that whatever be the outer manifestation of political mobilisation, it has generally been on class lines. The mobilisation pattern changes because of the changing class structure but the major objective has remained the same—the strengthening of the dominant class.

The great strength of the book lies in substantiating empirically in great detail the interplay of socioeconomic and political forces in Aligarh. It has given an empirical and scientific basis to class analysis of political economy of India which has been lacking far too long.

Purnima Roy
Miranda House
University of Delhi



M.R. KANTAK, ed., *First Anglo-Maratha War: The Last Phase (1780-83)*, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune, 1989, 311 pp., Rs. 210.

This collection contains 159 hitherto unpublished Marathi documents from the Menvali *dafter* of Nana Phadnis, printed in Devnagari with English summaries. Most of the documents are despatches and reports from officers in the field, and all the more valuable since even Grant Duff, who was able to see the reports from Hari Pant Phadke and Nana Phadnis to the Peshwa, does not seem to have had access to these papers.

The documents themselves are generally brief, blunt and factual. Successes and failures are plainly reported, though the difficulties of the commanders are often more vividly depicted, as when one officer writes that only God knew the trouble he was having with his unpaid troops, or another describes how each of his men could get only a single piece of bread each day. Lack of money and shortages of food and ammunition figure prominently in many of the letters. Complaints about the mercenary infantry (*gardis*) are also found, with one officer claiming that they were of little use in the hills, while in another report a *gardi* commander is described as lacking fire and continually clamouring for food and money. Indiscipline was not confined to the *gardis* however; the same report asks for a reinforcement of disciplined horsemen, who will follow orders and not loot the peasantry, so that the ripening paddy can be kept from falling into English hands. Cutting off, or carrying off the enemy's supplies was an important strategy, and the importance attached to it may be seen from the fact that a prisoner taken from the English camp was required not merely to describe the disposition of the army, but also to furnish a list of the prices prevailing in the camp bazar.

A careful historical introduction, detailed notes, a comprehensive glossary, and two indices further enhance the value of this volume for the student of Maratha history.

Sumit Guha
St. Stephen's College
University of Delhi

D.N. MACLEAN, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1989, x + 191 pp.

This is a detailed study of the pattern of conversion to Islam and the formation of an Arab-Islamic society in Sind between 711 and 1026 A.D. Maclean notes that of the two religions of Hinduism and Buddhism (which he thinks are 'fundamentally different' from each other) the first survived in Sind, while the latter

died out during the course of Arab rule'. His conclusion is that most Buddhists must have converted to Islam and collaborated with the Arabs at an early stage—unlike the Hindus. Furthermore, it is suggested that the evanescence of Buddhism from North India—which Maclean dates from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries—may also be due to the conversion of Buddhists to Islam. The Buddhist response is explained by its 'class basis': Buddhism was oriented towards interregional trade, while Sindh Hinduism appears to have had rural foundations, with the brahmins showing antagonism towards interregional trade. The Buddhists, too, had suffered 'relative deprivation' in the period immediately preceding and during the Arab conquest. In the early eighth century however the prospect of being incorporated in a 'pan-Islamic international trade network' held out much promise to the Buddhists. Hence they collaborated and subsequently converted. Maclean points at structural continuities between the prevalent Sindh Sammitiya Buddhism and the 'textualism' and 'literalism' or 'populism' of Sindh Islam. When coming to the subject of the spread of Ismailism in Sind in the tenth century, it is the 'relative deprivation' of certain rural groups which explains its temporary success—not the attempt by the Fatimids to divert the maritime India trade from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea (as B. Lewis and others have argued).

The weakness of this argument is that Islam is first linked with commercial closure (in the seventh century, especially in Central Asia), then with commercial expansion (eighth to ninth centuries), and subsequently again with 're-feudalization' (tenth century). In effect, Maclean adduces no evidence to support such a cyclical pattern. Moreover, for all we know, Hinduism and Buddhism in Sind—as in other frontier areas, for example, Kashmir, Bengal, or Southeast Asia, but to a degree in all parts of India—were not the fundamentally distinct categories which Maclean makes them out to be. They usually occur in mixed forms, or in a blurred pattern, at least in these centuries. Often the Buddhist laity conformed to the 'Hindu' caste system and followed brahmanical rites. Kings are seen to patronise both. Hinduism incorporated many features of Buddhism. There are even bigger problems with the 'differential response' theory. Even if Maclean is right in stressing (against Friedmann and others) that 'Buddhist collaboration' was not simply opportunistic but dependent on their class basis, it is quite clear that Buddhism was dying out, or changing, before the Arabs arrived. This was especially so in Upper Sind, but also in those parts of North India which were not conquered by the Arabs at all. Contrary to what Maclean suggests, the transformation of early Buddhism began long before the twelfth and even before the seventh century. It is true that Buddhists in Sind were associated with interregional commerce, but it is doubtful whether the brahman rulers were antagonistic to it. There is ample evidence in the *Chachnāma* to the contrary. Maclean's point that the volume and

importance of interregional trade in Sind had declined in the period preceding the Arab conquests is also extremely doubtful.

There is no evidence that the Sasanian near-monopoly was to the disadvantage of Sind. The evidence given by him of Arab expansion into Central Asia inhibiting the movement along the overland route is inadequate. What Maclean, following R.S. Sharma, calls 'feudalization' may in fact be seen as a process of agrarian expansion. To assume a direct continuity between the substance of Sindī Buddhism and the subsequent form of Islam seems rather naïve, since Sind's status of a frontier zone may explain the 'populist' character of both. Similarly, the idea that the political fragmentation of Sind was concomitant with the waning of interregional commerce in the late ninth and tenth centuries runs against the evidence of Arab geographers and unmistakable signs of continued urbanisation in the area during this period. Debal does not appear to have declined before the eleventh century. And it still seems sensible to relate the Fatimid interest in Sind to their commercial interests, as the possession of Multan and other inland cities (rather than Debal) would have been essential for the political control of Sind at large. In Multan the coinage was minted on the Fatimid pattern, and such coinage became widely used in the port towns of western India, the Arabian Sea and in the Persian Gulf region. In short, we may seriously question the validity of the overall conclusions of this book concerning the Islamisation of Sind, while it appears useless beforehand for the areas beyond Sind.

André Wink

University of Wisconsin
Madison

K.N. PANIKKAR, ed., *Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar*, Indian Council of Historical Research and People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, 571 pp., Rs. 160.

This volume has been prepared as part of an ICHR scheme to publish sources relating to peasant revolts and movements. Dr. Panikkar has selected sources from various repositories in India and abroad: Kerala State Archives, Tamil Nadu Archives, National Archives of India, Connemara Library, Madras and India Office Library, London. The documents have been arranged under two broad themes: agrarian structure and relations and peasant resistance and revolts. The governmental records contain British official perceptions and give details of the state policy and administrative action. The editor, aware of the inherent bias of the officials reflected in such records, has included as a partial corrective extracts from contemporary newspapers and periodicals. The rebellion of 1921 produced divergent

views among the people and these found their echo in the Legislative Assembly. Extracts from the debates in the Central Legislative Assembly have also been included in the volume.

After Malabar came into their possession, the British introduced alien notions of property and land relations in the district. Motivated by the political expediency of securing the support of a social class, the authorities were much concerned with affording security to the landlords (pp. 27 and 34). The intervention of the courts on the side of the landlords was also advocated. The size of the agrarian population being very great, the landlords had a favourable market to exploit. As a result, suits regarding land went on increasing in the various courts of Malabar. Land revenue was also enhanced adding to the burden of the peasantry. The resulting social tensions led to outbreaks which raged through South Malabar between 1836 and 1921. There were about thirty outbreaks in addition to putative plots and quasi outbreaks.

The Mappila (Malabar Muslim) outbreaks were characterised by violence and the belief that participation was an act of a *shahid*. As a rebel had put it: 'I have heard people sing . . . those who . . . die after killing their oppressors became *shahids* and get their reward. I have heard that the reward is *swargam* (paradise)' (p. 40). The violence was not indiscriminate and there were no attempts to plunder or loot.

In the eyes of the officials who wrote about these outbreaks, the Mappilas were fanatical, inherently aggressive and lacked civilisation (p. 57). In other words, the rural Mappila became a colonial stereotype. As a result the remedial measures became preventive operations of a repressive kind.

If the earlier outbreaks were isolated incidents limited in scope, extent and participation and could be suppressed within a few days, the rebellion of 1921 was different in many ways. It affected the whole interior of South Malabar and rebel leaders tried to establish their own administration in the area under their control. The rebel control of the area lasted till the arrival of the British army. About 50,000 people were involved in this rebellion. No wonder Panikkar gives more coverage to the events of 1921 than to lesser revolts.

The excellent introduction by the editor puts the sources in the historical perspective besides providing an analytical framework. The volume will be very useful for any analysis and interpretation of peasant revolts in colonial India.

K. Gopalankutty
Malabar Christian College
Calicut

BURTON STEIN, *Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989, vii + 374 pp., Rs. 250.

Thomas Munro is so embedded in understandings of the Raj that his biography is always implicated in the rewriting of colonial history. A new biography is particularly apt now, when images of village India, that he imbued with such authority, are under critical scrutiny. His private papers were not available in the 1960s, when the last major biographies were written. New research on the Company period and on regions where he worked creates a new context for interpreting his public and private papers. And now the history of his biographical treatment itself can be seen as a dimension of his life. Burton Stein thus participates in a history of representations of Munro as he tracks Munro's rhetorical repositioning and redeployment over time. And his biography supersedes others not only by presenting new data in new light. It also encompasses previous biographies to give students of Munro and other 'founders' of the Raj a better grip on the uses of biography in the rhetoric and legacy of imperialism.

Stein brings Munro down to earth. His Munro is neither a hero nor a founding father. He is not a symbol of his times or of the Company Raj; not a vehicle for the rise and triumph of Ryotwari. Munro became an imperial icon after his death, to indicate his lasting utility for the empire. But in life, he was the eldest son of a Scottish merchant brought low by the loss of American colonies. He sought his fortune in the Company military and ironically—given subsequent conflict between their respective 'systems'—Cornwallis gave Munro his start as an administrator. Cornwallis distrusted the Madras government and preferred military men to manage districts on the frontiers of Company expansion; and Munro was in the right place at the right time. His private papers depict his life primarily as a career in which military affairs were a constant fixation linked centrally to politics, above all, perhaps, to the politics of careerism. The biographical core of this book is thus how Munro made his career. The answer of course entails skill, luck, and patronage, but Stein shows exactly how these worked together as Munro advanced himself. His secret of success was his application of military strategy to administrative politics and of political strategy to military expansion.

Because Munro worked his way up in the Company system, his career opens a window onto its many levels and onto the many disparate worlds that imperialism made into one. Burton Stein explores that world with insight and authority, though its scope resists the narrow confines of biography. He leads the reader into the history and political economy of agrarian regions that Munro administered; into Company politics and debates in Madras, Calcutta, and London; into conflicts and alliances that embroiled

the Company with native powers in peninsular India and Burma. Not only does Stein explore Munro's world more fully than previous biographers, he also shows more fully how Munro developed his own intellectual grasp of that world and how his understanding of it became so influential.

As a result, this is also an incisive study in the politics of knowledge. Munro's vision was still contested at his death. Its authority was established later but based on his own intellectual victories. These victories were political. It was in politics—above all in *The Fifth Report on East India Company Affairs* in 1813—that he bested his enemies, some of whom, like Francis Ellis and Lionel Place, would have won the day had official understandings of India been decided on scholastic grounds. They were not. The form and content of Munro's knowledge gave it utility amid political conditions over which he had no control; its utility for men who could advance his career gave it power in his lifetime and imperial politics likewise determined its legacy.

In this biography, therefore, Munro's life constantly fades into Company politics, Company conquest and administration in south India, and the swirling activity of people who constructed the terrain of his career campaigning. As the biographer keeps our mind on Munro, the historian explores the Company's political world: their integration is largely left to the reader. Munro's career seems to be a pursuit of power in a system produced by many such competing pursuits and his success implicitly represents powers that shaped the colonial state by military logistics and styles of authority. He seems to have followed a path charted out in his first civilian role, when he sought 'nothing less than the completion, by administrative means, of the military conquest of the Baramahal territory' (p. 59). The significance of this for colonial state formation and colonial India remains to be explored.

David Ludden

University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia

NASIR TYABJI, *The Small Industries Policy in India*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1989, 223 pp., Rs. 200.

Promoting small industries, often by not allowing the large-scale ones to expand, diversify or modernise, has received much attention recently. Its economic rationale was tested in major works appearing in the eighties. This book is mainly a study in its origins. Tyabji argues that the policy did not quite arise from a choice, but a belief that successful capitalists could be, and needed to be, developed from within the small and artisan industries. The book has roughly three parts. The first develops 'an understanding of

the structure of small scale production' in the fifties, the second shows what kind of small enterprises have grown more, and the third traces the origins of the policy.

The first part is a summary of some reports of the 1950s on industries with a strong presence of crafts and small units. The summary is somewhat without focus and the coverage narrow, but more than that, the results do not inspire. Tyabji starts by defining what he is looking for, 'merchants', 'usurers', 'capitalists', etc., and predictably, ends by finding merchants, usurers, capitalists in these industries. The very general nature of his conclusions is not surprising. Crafts production is a system involving many elements, product, technology, region, markets, peoples. Unless one knows how this interdependence works in, say, textiles or leather, quoting from a few reports, or from Marx, may not add up to much.

The other statistical chapters are meant to show that capitalist small units have grown faster. This uses two pieces of data, decline of household industry, and growth of 'unregistered non-household' in industrial employment. Tyabji explains the second tendency as an effect of policy. But which one? Rates of employment growth can vary between sectors because of factor-price distortions, or because the sectors make different things, or because technology-choice is limited and factor-price is inelastic. There is not just one 'small industries policy' but many policies and many endogenous growth processes that work together to produce a result.

The best part of the book is one that describes how these policies evolved inside nationalist politics. This is seen as an attempt to reconcile decentralisation with a capitalist bias. There were divisions within the Congress and one lobby was moving away from Gandhi and rural artisans, toward the cities and the educated unemployed. This review could be more inclusive as many optimistic and influential accounts of small industry in the early twentieth century have been written by technologists and craft-historians. Also, the transition from this period to post-1950 is not clear. A capitalist bias was never apparent in the plans and anyway after Mahalanobis, concerns shifted to quite different issues.

To conclude, the book is a must for anyone interested in the ideological sources of India's development policy. The bibliography is good. But the index looks hurriedly compiled. And a few names are misspelt.

Tirthankar Roy

Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research
Bombay

R.K. SAXENA, *The Army of the Rajputs (A Study of 18th Century Rajputana)*, Saroj Prakashan, Udaipur, 1989, vii + 420 pp., Rs. 200.

The study of military history has hitherto not received much attention from

scholars, but over the last few years historians all over the world have realised its significance. This is seen in the numerous valuable studies in the form of monographs, and the publication of journals exclusively devoted to the study of military history.

In India little work has been done on military history. W. Irvine's, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls* (1903) and a few subsequent studies have mainly focused on high military personnel. For the lower-ranking officials and ordinary soldiers, they have relied mainly on official manuals. Though owing to certain limitations, they could not use documentary evidence, they have provided guidelines to the study of various aspects of the ordinary soldiers' career. A few studies based on seventeenth century documents have highlighted their military life and have even given an insight into the social and economic life of the lower strata of Indian society.

The eighteenth century marks the eclipse of the Mughal power and the emergence of regional states. The Rajput states emerged as successor states of the Mughal power. Dr. Saxena's study of the armies of these states indicates that the composition and organisation were on the lines of the Mughal army. The chiefs of these states were *mansabdars*, and therefore they organised their military contingents according to the requirements of the Mughals. After having served nearly two hundred years with the Mughals, the Rajput chiefs had absorbed most of the segments of the Mughal army into their own armies. This has been highlighted clearly by the author in the case of the armies of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Bundi, Kota and Mewar states. However, it would have been interesting had Dr. Saxena included the army of those Rajput states whose chiefs did not join the Mughal service, such as Sirohi. This would have illustrated the propinquities and variations between the army of Rajput *mansabdars* and the *Peshkashi* Rajput chiefs.

Dr. Saxena has organised his study statewise which makes it difficult for a reader to perceive the differences and similarities. An integrated analytical approach could have dealt with one particular aspect of the different states at one place. This could avoid overlapping at many places.

The author's oft-repeated conclusion that there were variations in the pay and perquisites of the soldiers on the basis of clan and caste is not supported by his own evidence. Without taking into account other factors such as the kind of animal, the experience of soldier and the nature of duty, it would be far-fetched to assume that the pay varied on the basis of caste and clan. In case of *rozinadar* troopers he contradicts his earlier statement by saying that the wages varied on the basis of the breed of horses (p. 150). Further, his own data suggest that the members of the same caste were paid at different rates (p. 228, fn.). It is difficult to accept the inference that, like the Mughal *zat* and *sawar* ranks, the Rajputs had binary rank *deel* and *tabindars*. These words are used in the Mughal military documents but

in a different sense. *Deel* and *tabindar* mean, 'person' and 'follower' respectively.

Without any specific evidence Dr. Saxena's conclusion, 'the army of the Rajputs was clannish in character and every Rajput preferred to serve under the leadership of own clan', is baseless. Dr. Saxena has overlooked empirical studies which have shown palpably the heterogenous character of the Rajput armies.

For the *Pattayats* of Bikaner, Dr. Saxena holds that they had effective control over the rulers of Bikaner but he does not provide any explanation for the increasing control of the *Pattayats*. Actually, in the changing political situation now the rulers could not expect support from the Centre, and depended fully on the *Pattayats* to deal with external and internal crises. Further, Dr. Saxena says that the *Pattayats* posted outside the *watan jagir* were given increments till they served there. But he does not elaborate on this and we do not know whether it was customary for them to serve in the *watan jagir*, for which they were not paid any extra amount, or whether to serve outside the *watan jagir* was considered an additional duty, thereby entitling them to an additional amount.

Dr. Saxena has put a lot of labour into computing the information in the form of tables and lists. These tables look impressive but are devoid of analysis. Whatever Dr. Saxena explains in the text is not borne out by his data. He says that the members of the ruling clan in every state held the higher position but the list showing *jagirs* of the ruling clan contradicts this statement. For instance, in Jaipur state, Rajawat is a ruling clan of the Kachawahas but the appendix (11.1) indicates that the Narukas (Rs. 144,000), Bankawat (Rs. 125,000), Kalyanot (Rs. 104,000) palpably held more *jagir* than the Rajawats (Rs. 62,000). Similarly, on p. 147, Dr. Saxena's inference of paying the soldiers on the basis of the clan of horseman and the breed of horse is not discernible from the tables.

The text does not indicate the states in which *ahadis* were employed. It could be interesting if comparative remarks were made on the *ahadis* and the *ghud chadas*, a new class of horsemen serving in some Rajput armies. The amount of salary viz. Rs. 600 per annum was not high because in the seventeenth century an ordinary horseman was paid the same amount of salary.

Dr. Saxena's study on artillery suggests an increasing power of firearms in the Rajput armies. The value of this study could be enhanced if the technological changes in the process of manufacturing firearms were discussed. The wrong rendering of *aligols* as *algols* by the author suggests that he does not perceive the significance of this company.

It seems that the book has been hurriedly produced, since it carries numerous flaws. The rendering of Persian words is carelessly done. At many places, the names of rulers are not identified with their states. Several

technical words are not defined. Furthermore it is surprising to find a photo copy of the sixteen *dagh* out of twenty (p. 156) which has been appropriated by the author from the present reviewer's articles, published in the *Indian Historical Records Commission*, 1981 and the *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. X, ns. 1-2 without acknowledgement.

S. Inayet A. Zaidi
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi

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CONTENTS

OMKAR GOSWAMI and ASEEM SHRIVASTAVA/ Commercialisation of Indian Agriculture 1900–1940: What do Supply Response Functions Say?

SHEKHAR PATHAK/ *Begar* Abolition Movements in British Kumaun

TIM DYSON and ARUP MAHARATNA/ Excess Mortality during the Bengal Famine: A Re-evaluation

K.N. GANESH/ Ownership and Control of Land in Medieval Kerala: *Janmam-Kanam* Relations during the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

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Commercialisation of Indian agriculture, 1900–1940: What do supply response functions say?

Omkar Goswami

The Indian Statistical Institute
New Delhi
and
Economics Department
Rutgers University

Aseem Shrivastava

Economics Department
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

1: Introduction

There have been two leading traditions of analysing the agrarian changes that occurred in India during the colonial epoch. The older and historiographically dominant approach can be traced back to the works of civil servants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While conducting the survey operations, the district officers carefully studied the history of the region and the changes that had taken place; the data were subsequently published as detailed settlement reports and, occasionally, as monographs.¹ This tradition has been pursued by many latter day economic and social historians, with an emphasis on 'political economy', on the details of peasant cultivation, on the social organisation of production, on crop marketing,

¹ Some of the classic works that come to mind are M.L. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, Oxford, 1925; J.C. Jack, *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, Oxford, 1916, and G. Keatinge, *The Rural Economy of the Bombay Deccan*, Bombay, 1912.

Note: We are indebted to the staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, the Krishn Bhavan Library, the Ratan Tata Library, and the National Archives of India.

debt, and on the distribution of income, wealth, and landholding.² In the early 1960s, thanks to the pioneering work of Raj Krishna and Dharm Narain, a new methodology appeared in Indian agrarian history: that of rigorously using time-series data to compute acreage and output responses of various commercial crops under different relative price regimes.³

These two approaches answer rather different types of questions. Supply responses estimated from pure time-series data assess the extent to which the output or area under a given crop reacted to different factors, particularly relative prices or profits. Indian economic historians who follow the more established political economy approach usually do not address this issue, and certainly not with any quantitative precision or finesse. Instead, these authors generally concentrate on explaining how exogenous changes in demand in relatively far-off product markets affected the organisation of peasant production and the socio-economic relations between various agents in the countryside. Thus, there are rich details regarding tenurial conditions, rental obligations, agricultural credit and hypothecation, inter-linked market transactions, the role of commodity traders and grain merchants, and the like.

Arguably, the two methods are complementary: one analyses the role of prices and profits in income generation, while the other examines the process of income distribution. Nevertheless, Indian economic historians have generally avoided mixing the two methodologies. Of late, there have

² For northern India, see T. Kessinger, *Vilayatpur, 1848-1968: Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village*, Berkeley, 1974, T. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords and the British Raj*, Berkeley, 1979, A. Siddiqi, *Agrarian Change in a North Indian State. Uttar Pradesh, 1819-33*, Delhi, OUP, 1973, E. Stokes, *Peasants and the Raj*, Cambridge, CUP, 1978, and E. Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*, Berkeley, 1972. For western India, see J. Breman, *Patronage and Exploitation: Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, India*, Berkeley, 1974, I. Catanach, *Rural Credit in Western India, 1875-1930*, Berkeley, 1970, S. Guha, *The Agrarian Economy of the Bombay Deccan, 1818-1941*, Delhi, OUP, 1985, and R. Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1968. For southern India, see C. J. Baker, *The Politics of South India, 1920-1937*, Cambridge, CUP, 1976 and *An Indian Rural Economy, 1880-1955*, Delhi, OUP, 1984, R. E. Frykenberg, *Guntur District, 1788-1848*, Oxford, 1965, D. Kumar, 'Agrarian Structure. South India' in Dharma Kumar, ed., *Cambridge Economic History of India*, II, Cambridge, CUP, 1983; and D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics. The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920*, Cambridge, CUP, 1976. For Eastern India, see S. Bose, *Agrarian Bengal. Economy, Social Structure, and Politics, 1919-1947*, Cambridge CUP, 1986, P. Chatterjee, *Bengal. The Land Question, 1920-1947*, Calcutta, 1985, B. B. Chaudhuri, 'Eastern India' in Dharma Kumar, ed., *Cambridge Economic History of India*, II, Cambridge, CUP, 1983, O. Goswami, *Industry, Trade, and Peasant Society: Jute in Eastern India, 1900-1947*, Delhi, OUP, 1991, and A. Sen, S. Mukherji, and P. Chatterjee, *Three Studies on the Agrarian Structure in Bengal*, Delhi, OUP, 1982.

³ Raj Krishna, 'Farm Supply Response in India-Pakistan: A Case Study of the Punjab Region', *Economic Journal*, LXXIII, 1963, and D. Narain, *The Impact of Price Movements on Areas under Selected Crops in India*, Cambridge, CUP, 1965. For a review of subsequent work on supply response functions, see H. Askari, and J. T. Cummings, *Agricultural Supply Responses: A Summary of the Econometric Evidence*, New York, 1976.

been some attempts at uniting the two. In particular, Washbrook (1978) and Robert (1983) have used supply elasticities to comment on the structures of agrarian production and income distribution.⁴ In doing so, Washbrook and Robert raise two very important questions. The first is purely factual and empirical: What were the acreage or output responses of cash crops to changes in relative prices? This is, indeed, an important question, for historians have written much on agricultural commercialisation without carefully examining this primary issue. The second question is on methodology: What are the valid inferences that can be made about the structures of production and marketing from supply response coefficients? Our article attempts to analyse these two questions.

Section 2 outlines some econometric models that have often been used to estimate various acreage response elasticities. In Section 3, three major regions and their crops are analysed: jute versus autumn rice in Bengal, cotton versus *jowar* (sorghum) in the canal colonies of the Punjab, and cotton versus *bajra* (millet) in the dry districts of the Madras Presidency. The reason for choosing the two non-food crops is obvious: along with sugar, jute and cotton were viewed as the three most important cash crops in colonial India. The Punjab is chosen primarily because we wish to examine whether some of Raj Krishna's conclusions remain valid under somewhat more rigorous econometric scrutiny. The dry districts of Madras were analysed by Washbrook (1978) and Robert (1983). We wish to compare our results with theirs, and initiate a discussion on the limits of inference from time-series supply responses. Section 4 examines the extent to which elasticities estimated from time series data can be meaningfully used to explain changes in the conditions of agrarian production and income distribution. Section 5 concludes the essay.

2: The Estimating Models

In this section two well-known econometric models are presented, which are subsequently used to estimate the response of acreage to changes in relative price during 1900–01 to 1939–40. These are:

1. Supply responses with partial acreage adjustment, but static harvest price expectations.
2. Responses with partial acreage adjustment as well as adaptive price expectations.

⁴ Washbrook, D.A, 'Economic Development and Social Stratification in Rural Madras: The Dry Region, 1878–1929', in Dewey and Hopkins, eds., *The Imperial Impact*, London, 1978, and B Robert, 'Economic Change and Agrarian Organization in 'Dry' South India, 1880–1940', *Modern Asian Studies*, 1983. We shall refer to these two articles in discussing the uses and misuses of econometrically estimated coefficients.

It will soon be evident that, despite their relative simplicity, the two models explain a great deal of the changes in the area allocated to commercial crops during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

A commercial crop is defined as any agricultural produce that is wholly or partly sold in markets. Hence, foodgrain can be a commercial crop so long as a part of the harvest is intentionally sold by the peasantry. The acreage that a peasant household desires to allocate to a commercial crop in any given agricultural year (A_t^*) ought to depend upon:

1. The expected harvest price of that crop relative to its agronomically germane substitute (P_t^c).
2. The expected yield of the crop relative to its substitute (Y_t^c).
3. The riskiness of the crop in relation to its substitute. This is often captured by the variance or standard deviation of relative harvest prices over the past three years (σ_t^P). Here, we have used the variance.
4. Similarly, another risk factor is the variance of the relative yield over the past three years (σ_t^Y).
5. Sowing season rainfall (R_t).
6. Share of acreage under assured irrigation (I_t).

In the most general form, therefore,

$$A_t^* = f(P_t^c, Y_t^c, \sigma_t^P, \sigma_t^Y, R_t, I_t).^5$$

The first issue that needs to be examined is the relationship between sowing season rainfall and acreage. Almost all estimating models specify rainfall in a monotonic fashion: more is better than less. This runs counter to the basic tenets of cultivation. Between the extremes of drought and floods there is a well defined range of optimal rainfall for each crop, which is never captured by a monotonic specification. Following Lahiri and Roy (1985), we have modelled rainfall in a manner similar to the well known gamma distribution, where $A_t^* = f(ke^{-\alpha R_t} R_t^\beta, \dots)$, with $\alpha > 0$, $\beta > 0$.⁶ This formulation has three distinct advantages. First, it is more realistic than monotonic rainfall. Second, optimal rainfall for each crop can be directly calculated from the estimates of the supply response model. Third, unlike a normal distribution, it allows for asymmetric benefits and losses from rainfall.

⁵ This formulation is almost identical to the one estimated by Behrman for crops grown in Thailand. See J.R. Behrman, *Supply Responses in Underdeveloped Agriculture: A Case Study of Four Major Annual Crops in Thailand, 1937-1963*, Amsterdam, North Holland, 1968, p. 157.

⁶ A. Lahiri and P. Roy, 'Rainfall and Supply Response: A Study of Rice in India', *Journal of Development Economics*, 1985.

To estimate constant elasticities, we have specified the response model in logarithmic form:

$$l(A_t^*) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 l(P_t^e) + \alpha_2 l(Y_t^e) + \alpha_3 l(\sigma_t^p) + \alpha_4 l(\sigma_t^y) + \alpha_5 l(R_t) - \alpha_6 R_t + \alpha_7 l(I_t) + u_t \quad (1)$$

where 'l' represents natural logarithms, and u_t is the random error with classical least square properties. With the preliminaries completed, we can turn to the estimating models.

Partial Adjustment with Static Expectations

To translate the 'desired' and 'expected' variables into estimable entities, we have used the Nerlove–Cagan approach. Acreage adjusts gradually towards the desired allocation (the long run equilibrium) according to the following adjustment rule:

$$l(A_t) - l(A_{t-1}) = \lambda[l(A_t^*) - l(A_{t-1})] \text{ with } 0 \leq \lambda \leq 1 \quad (2)$$

Similarly, expectations change according to past performance. If the experience of the immediate past is better (or worse) than expected, it is assumed that current expectations are revised upwards (downwards) by a constant proportion. Therefore:

$$l(P_t^e) - l(P_{t-1}^e) = \theta[l(P_{t-1}) - l(P_{t-1}^e)] \text{ with } 0 \leq \theta \leq 1 \text{ and} \quad (3)$$

$$l(Y_t^e) - l(Y_{t-1}^e) = \rho[l(Y_{t-1}) - l(Y_{t-1}^e)] \text{ with } 0 \leq \rho \leq 1 \quad (4)$$

With static expectations ($\theta = \rho = 1$), only the last period's observation counts. Thus, a model of partial adjustment with static expectations may be written as:

$$l(A_t) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 l(P_{t-1}) + \beta_2 l(Y_{t-1}) + \beta_3 l(\sigma_t^p) + \beta_4 l(\sigma_t^y) + \beta_5 l(R_t) - \beta_6 R_t + \beta_7 l(I_t) + \beta_8 l(A_{t-1}) + w_t \quad (5)$$

where $\beta_i = \lambda \alpha_i$ ($i = 0, 1, \dots, 7$), $\beta_8 = (1 - \lambda)$, and $w_t = \lambda u_t$. This form can be estimated by ordinary least squares.

Partial Adjustment and Adaptive Expectations

Adaptive relative yield expectations do not play a significant role in explaining the acreage allocated to any of the crops. Therefore, from an empirical point of view, there is some justification in assuming static yield expectations. Given adaptive relative price (but static yield) expectations ($\theta \neq 1$, $\rho = 1$), the estimating model can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned}
l(A_t) = & \beta_0\theta + \beta_1\theta l(P_{t-1}) + \beta_2 l(Y_{t-1}) - \beta_2(1-\theta) l(Y_{t-2}) + \beta_3 l(\sigma_t^P) \\
& - \beta_3(1-\theta) l(\sigma_{t-1}^P) + \beta_4 l(\sigma_t^Y) - \beta_4(1-\theta) l(\sigma_{t-1}^Y) + \beta_5 l(R_t) \\
& - \beta_5(1-\theta) l(R_{t-1}) - \beta_6 R_t + \beta_6(1-\theta)R_{t-1} + \beta_7 l(I_t) - \beta_7(1-\theta) l(I_{t-1}) \\
& + (\beta_8 + 1 - \theta) l(A_{t-1}) - \beta_8(1-\theta)lA_{t-2} + [w_t - (1-\theta) w_{t-1}] \quad (6)
\end{aligned}$$

This form cannot be estimated by ordinary least squares for at least two reasons. First, the new error term $[w_t - (1-\theta)w_{t-1}]$ can be serially correlated. Second, ordinary least squares does not ensure unique and consistent estimates of the parameters.⁷ To estimate this model, we have used a non-linear least square procedure given in MicroTSP Version 6.5.

3: The Data and the Results

Jute versus Autumn Rice, 1900–40

By the beginning of the twentieth century, burlap had become the world's most important primary goods packaging material, and more than 90 per cent of the world's raw jute was grown in the riverain plains of Bengal. In ten major jute growing districts⁸ the crop accounted for anything between 35 per cent to 55 per cent of gross sown area in the cultivating season. Grown exclusively by small peasant families, jute was sown in March or April, and harvested in August or September. The secular growth in area under jute cultivation occurred in part due to the farmers clearing out new land; but, in a large measure, this reflected a switch away from the substitute crop—autumn or *aus* paddy. In medium and high land, jute and autumn rice were strong substitutes, in the sense that their sowing and harvesting seasons were almost identical.

Jute was a quintessential commercial crop. First, the entire output was exported either in its raw form or as burlap produced in the mills near Calcutta. Second, jute was by far the biggest cash earner for the peasantry. Third, given the nature of the product—a cheap material for packing primary goods—it was extremely susceptible to volatile price movements. Totally uncertain demand in far off markets, especially in the United States of America, set prices for burlap and jute; and, at the time of sowing, the cultivators did not have the slightest inkling as to what the harvest price and revenue might be. Between 1900–01 and 1939–40, the coefficient of variation of the harvest price of jute was 0.425, which was 54 per cent greater than that of autumn rice. Fourth, during 1900–40, jute went through a number

⁷ For instance, the independent estimates of θ and, say, β_6 , may not be consistent with the estimate of the product term $\delta = \beta_6(1-\theta)$

⁸ These were Dacca, Mymensingh, Tippera (Comilla), Faridpur, Pabna, Bogra, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, and Jalpaiguri

of cycles: the nineteenth century boom that terminated with World War I, the dislocation of the war, the boom of the 1920s, the acute depression of the 1930s, followed by the shock of World War II. How did the cultivators as a whole react to these changes? How quickly did they respond to relative price signals? Were they classic risk averse agents opting for safe crops with low expected income and low variance? These are some of the questions that can be addressed through a proper estimation of an acreage response function.

The data for the period are from diverse sources. Acreage under, and yield of, jute and autumn rice in the ten major jute growing districts are from the *Season and Crop Reports of Bengal*, the *Agricultural Statistics of British India*, and from Narain (1965). The data on irrigated area, and gross and net cropped are from the *Season and Crop Reports* and the *Agricultural Statistics*: dividing the former by net cropped area gives the share of irrigated area for the ten districts. In Bengal, this was a small proportion of the total cropped area. Monthly rainfall data are available from the Meteorological Survey of India. For sowing season rainfall, we have used the months of March and April for north and east Bengal. The harvest prices—which are up-country secondary market prices—are available from five different sources: the Indian Jute Mills Association's annual reports, *Season and Crop Reports*, K.L. Datta's *Report of the Inquiry into the Rise Prices in India*, the *Report of the Paddy and Rice Enquiry Committee* of the Government of Bengal, and Narain (1965). The series are labelled as follows:

LAJUB	Log of area under jute in the ten major jute growing districts of Bengal, 1900–1939, 000 acres.
LSAJUB	Log of the share of area under jute in the major jute growing districts. The share is defined as the area under jute divided by the area under jute and autumn rice.
LRPJRB	Log of the relative price of jute to autumn rice in Bengal, both measured in rupees per <i>maund</i> .
LVARP	Log of the ratio of the variance in prices of the two competing crops, jute to autumn rice. For each crop, the variance is the square of the difference between actual price in any year and the three year moving average of that year.
DRPJRB	A dummy variable in relative prices to account for the exceptionally high relative price swing that occurred in 1925—when the price ratio of jute to autumn rice rose by 87 per cent over the previous five years. DRPJRB = RPJRB for 1925, and 0 otherwise.
LYDJRB	Log of the relative yields of the two crops, jute versus autumn rice in Bengal.

LVARYD	Log of the ratio of the variance in yields of the two competing crops, jute to autumn rice. For each crop, the variance is the square of the difference between actual yield in any year and the three year moving average of that year.
RAINB	Sowing season rainfall, March and April, east and north Bengal, in inches.
LRAINB	Log of RAINB.
LSIRBN	Log of share of irrigated area in the ten jute growing districts of Bengal.

Partial adjustment with static expectations

As a first approximation, we estimated models with partial adjustment and static price expectations, using two sets of dependent variables—the log of area under jute (LAJUB), and the log of the share of area under jute (LSAJUB). The results are given in Table 1 and reveal several things. Most important is the magnitude and the significance of the short run elasticity of acreage with respect to changes in the previous year's relative price ratio. In the models with absolute acreage as the dependent variable, the elasticity varies from 0.5238 to 0.5809 and is always statistically significant even at a half per cent confidence interval. In other words, all other things remaining the same, a one per cent increase (or decrease) in the relative price of jute brought about a 0.52 per cent to a 0.58 per cent increase (or decrease) in the area under jute in the following year. In terms of the share of area under jute, a one per cent change in the previous year's relative price ratio set off a 0.42 per cent to 0.48 per cent change in the share of area under jute.

The results clearly show that the jute growing region's reaction to relative price signals was remarkably similar to those of other important cash crops grown by peasants in various parts of the world. Moreover, the estimates of the annual acreage adjustment factor (λ) vary within a close range—from 0.43 to 0.48—and are significant. Thus, according to this type of specification, 43 percent to 48 per cent of the acreage response in the jute cultivating districts occurred within a single year, with the remainder adjusting gradually over successive years. Furthermore, the optimal rainfall remains quite robust to changes in specification, varying only marginally between 4.75 inches and 4.97 inches.⁹ Figures A and B plot the observed and estimated values of, respectively, the area under jute and the share of area under jute, using the results of Models 3 and 6. They show that virtually all the turning points over time are explained by the estimating models.

⁹ Optimal rainfall is $-(\beta_1/\beta_2)$ from equation (5)

Table 1

Supply Response Coefficients, Jute Versus Autumn Rice, Partial Adjustment with Static Expectations, 1903-04 to 1939-40

	<i>L</i> AJUB	<i>L</i> AJUB	<i>L</i> AJUB	<i>LS</i> AJUB	<i>LS</i> AJUB	<i>LS</i> AJUB
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>
Intercept	3.3332* (0 6597)	3.3894* (0 6413)	3.3260* (0 6206)	-0 4048* (0.1297)	-0.4212* (0.1247)	-0.4361* (0 1180)
LRPJRB(-1)	0 5296* (0.0744)	0 5238* (0 0667)	0 5809* (0 0720)	0 4320* (0 0594)	0 4239* (0 0533)	0.4778* (0.0563)
DRPJRB(-1)			-0.0773** (0.0436)			-0 0731* (0.0341)
LVARP(-1)	-0.0044 (0.0066)			-0 0031 (0 0053)		
LYDJRB(-1)	-0.0526 (0.2231)			-0 0671 (0.1782)		
LVARYD(-1)	-0.0163** (0.0081)	-0.0163* (0.0070)	-0 0143* (0 0069)	-0 0131** (0 0065)	-0.0126* (0.0056)	-0 0107** (0.0054)
LRAINB	0 3316* (0 1362)	0 3279* (0 1148)	0 3530* (0.1118)	0.2915* (0.1090)	0 2811* (0.0919)	0.3046* (0 0876)
RAINB	-0 0696* (0 0294)	-0 0691* (0.0244)	-0.0734* (0 0237)	-0 0594* (0 0235)	-0 0572* (0 1955)	-0.0613* (0.0186)
LSIRBN	-0.1653* (0.0729)	-0.1780* (0 0615)	-0 1820* (0 0595)	-0.1149** (0.0586)	-0 1294* (0.0496)	-0.1332* (0.0469)
LAJUB(-1)	0.5656* (0 0842)	0.5574* (0.0817)	0.5630* (0.0789)			
LSAJUB(-1)				0.5308* (0 0888)	0.5205* (0.0859)	0 5255* (0 0812)
Adjustment Factor(λ)	0.4344	0.4426	0 4370	0.4692	0 4795	0 4745
Optimal Rainfall	4.76"	4.75"	4.81"	4.90"	4 91"	4 97"
R-Squared	0.8215	0 8173	0.8351	0 8197	0.8152	0 8405
R-Bar Squared	0 7705	0 7807	0.7953	0.7682	0.7782	0.8019
DW	1 7906	1.8262	1.8557	1.7861	1 8220	1 8785
H-Stat	0 7413§	0.6091§	0.5005§	0.7729§	0.6352§	0.4249§
RSS	0.3162	0.3237	0.2921	0.2021	0 2072	0 1789
F	16.109	22.360	20 984	15.911	22 054	21 824
Observations	37	37	37	37	37	37

Note : Figures in () give the standard errors. * indicates that the coefficient is statistically different from zero at 5% two-tail of the t-distribution. ** indicates significance at greater than 5% but less than 10% § indicates no first order serial correlation. If $H > 1.645$, then one can reject the null hypothesis of zero first order autocorrelation at 5%.

FIGURE 1: OBSERVED AND ESTIMATED AREA UNDER JUTE, 1903-39, PARTIAL ADJUSTMENT

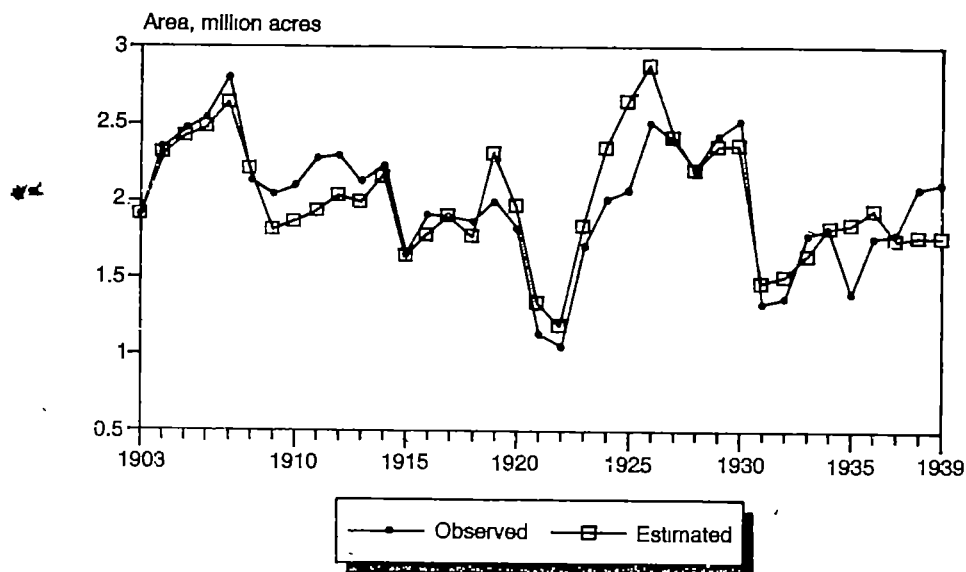
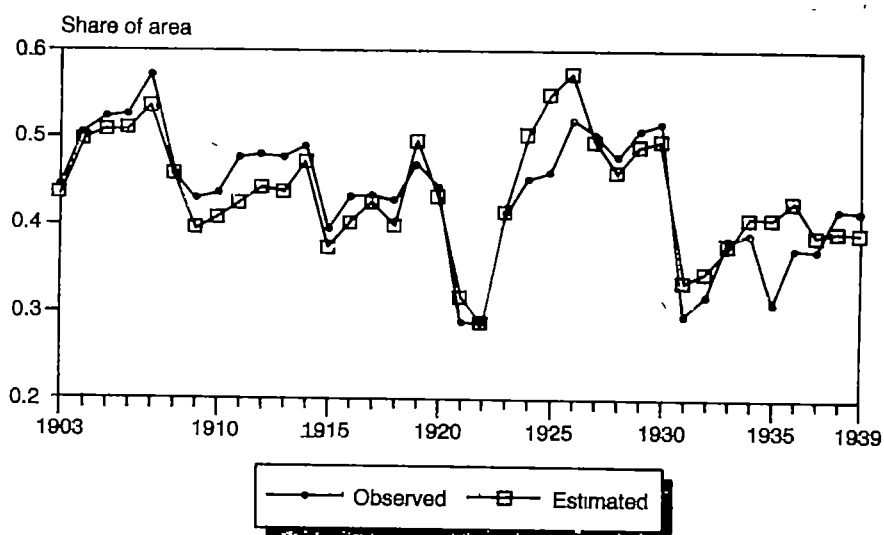


FIGURE 2: OBSERVED AND ESTIMATED AREA UNDER JUTE, 1903-39, PARTIAL ADJUSTMENT



These partial adjustment—static expectation regressions raise two other questions. First, given the fact that the coefficients of ratio of the variance in prices (LVARP) were statistically insignificant,¹⁰ should one infer that the region did not show any risk aversion? Or, is this because of misspecification? Second, the coefficient of acreage with respect to irrigation has the wrong sign: a rise in irrigation ought to increase the area under a crop. Is this due to some agronomic factors—for example, with an increase in irrigated area, the farmers shifted to the more water dependent crop, autumn rice? Or, is it a specification error that might get corrected once expectations are brought in?

Partial adjustment and adaptive expectations

To examine these issues, we used non-linear least squares to estimate the response models with partial acreage adjustment and adaptive relative price expectations. Table 2 gives the summary results of four different models (the complete printout is in the Appendix).

Table 2
*Jute versus Autumn Rice, Partial Acreage Adjustment with
Adaptive Price Expectations, 1904–05 to 1939–40*

	<i>LAJUB</i>	<i>LAJUB</i>	<i>LSAJUB</i>	<i>LSAJUB</i>
	<i>Model 7</i>	<i>Model 8</i>	<i>Model 9</i>	<i>Model 10</i>
Intercept	2.5020*	2.4772*	-0.4427*	-0.4428*
LRPJRB (-1)	0.5110*	0.5102*	0.4246*	0.4241*
LVARP (-1)	-0.0114*	-0.0114*	-0.0105*	-0.0105*
LYDJRB (-1)	-0.0255		-0.0175	
LVARYD (-1)	-0.0150*	-0.0146*	-0.0129*	-0.0127*
LRAINB	0.3678*	0.3606*	0.2919*	0.2877*
RAINB	-0.0646*	-0.0631*	-0.0520*	-0.0510*
LSIRBN	-0.1020	-0.1044	-0.0546	-0.0555
LAJUB (-1)	0.6605*	0.6605*		
LSAJUB (-1)			0.6003*	0.6005*
Expectation Factor $\hat{\theta}$	0.3539*	0.3492*	0.3453*	0.6005*
Optimal Rainfall	5.69"	5.71"	5.62"	5.64"
RSS	0.2249	0.2733	0.1563	0.1564
Log likelihood	36.781	36.772	46.825	46.819
F	15.841	18.495	17.802	20.790

Note: The estimates from using the multiplicative relative price dummy for 1925 do not give any additional explanatory mileage, and have not been reported.

¹⁰ This has nothing to do with the effects of multicollinearity. The variance-covariance matrix shows no strong linear relation between relative prices and its variance, or, for that matter, relative yields and its variance.

The non-linear specification clarifies quite a few issues. First, variance in prices (LVARP) is no longer an insignificant explanatory variable, which suggests that the earlier static expectation specification was an incorrect one. However, the elasticities of acreage or share of acreage with respect to changes in variance in prices as well as relative yields are quite small; and it would be fair to infer that the jute growing region did not show any remarkable aversion to risks. Second, the effects of irrigation get eliminated altogether.¹¹ Now, one sees that artificial irrigation had no effect whatsoever, which is not surprising in a region that was abundantly irrigated by nature. Third, farmers definitely adapted their expectations about relative price from year to year. If the previous years relative price was higher (or lower) than what was expected, the current year's expectation were revised upwards (downwards) by 34 per cent to 35 per cent. Such a high revision factor reflected the annual volatility of raw jute prices. Fourth (though this does not show up in Table 2) with adaptive price expectations, the acreage adjustment factor increases substantially, and is very close to unity — implying that almost all the supply adjustment occurred within a year. Again, this need not surprise us. Highly commercialised, price and market oriented peasants all over the world make acreage adjustments with alacrity, and there is no reason to believe that the jute cultivators as a whole were any different. Finally, the acreage responses to changes in relative harvest price are remarkably robust and significant: a one per cent change in relative prices triggered off a 0.5 per cent change in jute acreage, and a 0.4 per cent change in the share of area under this commercial crop. Figures C and D plot the observed and estimated values of acreage and share of area under jute, using the results of Models 8 and 10. Once again, almost all the turning points are explained by the regressions.

Cotton versus jowar, canal colonies, Punjab

Once a desolate and arid region, Lyallpur, Montgomery and Shahpur became the most prosperous and agriculturally commercialised region in the Punjab by the first decade of the twentieth century. This was almost entirely due to the rapid development of four great canal systems: the Upper Jhelum, the Upper Chenab, the Ravi Barrage, and the Lower Bari Doab. Between 1900 and 1939, the share of canal irrigated area increased at a trend rate of 1.64 per cent per year. In response to this, the Punjabi farmers switched heavily into cotton, so much so that the acreage under cotton grew at a compound annual trend rate of 2.85 per cent.

The cotton boom of the canal colonies is important in another respect. This was the region first analysed by Raj Krishna (1963). In a classic paper,

¹¹ Thus, the earlier negative sign seems to be a pure specification error.

**FIGURE 3: OBSERVED AND ESTIMATED AREA UNDER JUTE, 1904-39,
PARTIAL ADJUSTMENT**

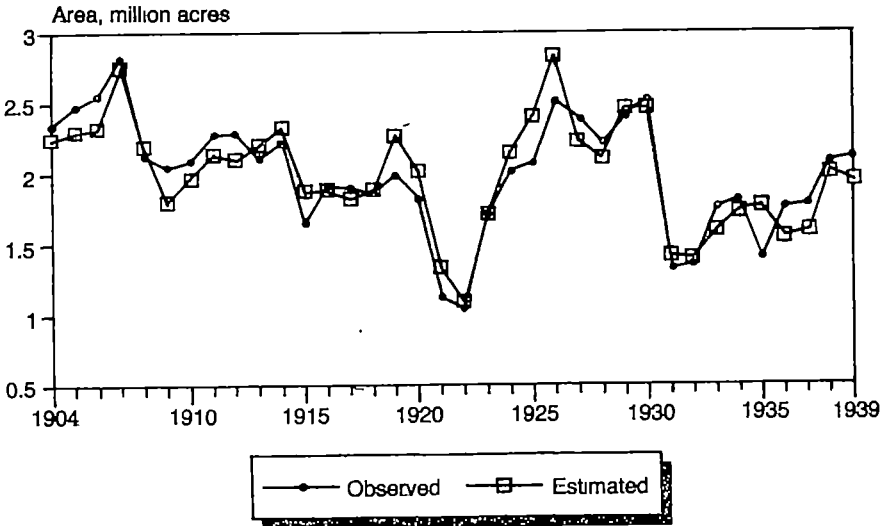
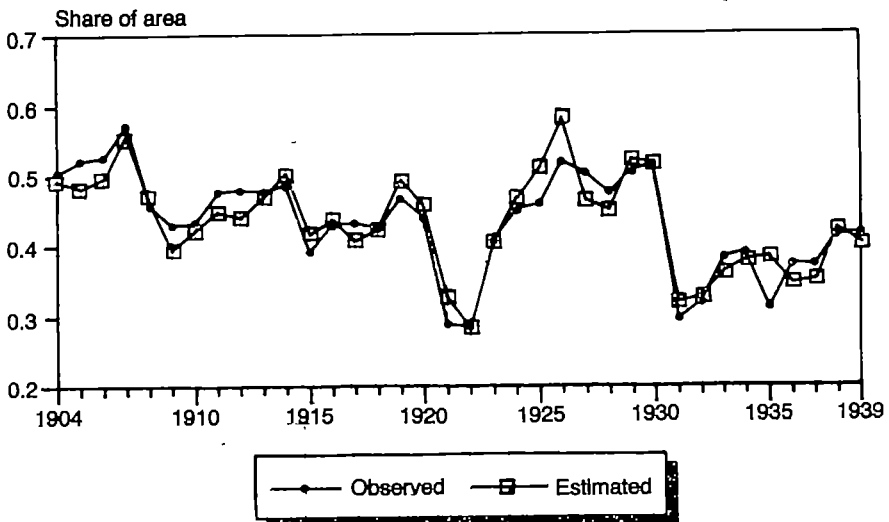


**FIGURE 4: OBSERVED AND ESTIMATED AREA UNDER JUTE, 1904-39,
NON LINEAR LEAST SQUARES**



he showed the extent to which the farmers from west Punjab responded to relative prices, and demonstrated the close functional relationship between acreage under cotton and changes in the price ratio of cotton to wheat. There are, however, a couple of problems with Krishna (1963). In the first place, cotton and wheat are not agronomic substitutes; their sowing and harvesting seasons are quite different, and they do not impinge upon one another. The correct substitute is *jowar* (sorghum): on a given plot of land, one can either cultivate cotton or *jowar*, but not both. Second, Krishna's econometric techniques can be improved upon. Although he used an adaptive expectation, partial adjustment framework, he estimated the models using variants of the ordinary least squares technique; and, we know that correct estimation requires non-linear least squares. In what follows, we re-estimate the acreage responses using the same data.

The data are from *Season and Crop Reports, Agricultural Statistics of British India*, and Narain (1965). To eliminate the effects of an expansion of the external margins of cultivation (whose opportunity cost is zero), we define the dependent variable as the share of area under cotton. The data labels are:

- LSACPU Log of the share of area under cotton in the canal colonies of the Punjab.
- LRPCJPU Log of the relative harvest price of cotton to *jowar*.
- LRYCJPU Log of the relative yield of cotton to *jowar*.
- LRAINPU Log of sowing season rainfall.
- LSIRPU Log of the share of irrigated area.

The results are given in Table 3.

The estimates for the Punjab are quite illuminating, and again underscore the strong responsiveness of agriculture. First, depending on the specification, a one per cent increase (decrease) in the relative price of cotton to *jowar* led to a 0.28 per cent increase (reduction) in the share of area under cotton. More important was cotton's dependence on assured water supply. All other things remaining the same, a one per cent increase in the share of canal irrigated area led to a 1.2 per cent increase in the share of acreage allocated to cotton—a remarkable reflection of the benefits of irrigation to a cash crop. Third, it is not surprising that, given the paucity of rain in the region, the gamma form of rainfall did not yield a result. The reason is simple. Even if the gamma type of distribution was the true specification, there was never enough precipitation for the turning point to be observed. Thus, only the upward sloping segment of the distribution is relevant, which can be approximated by monotonic rainfall (Models 13 and 14). Although irrigation dominated in no uncertain terms, the role of rainfall was not an insignificant one: *ceteris paribus*, a one per cent increase

Table 3

The Supply Response Coefficients, Cotton versus Jowar, Punjab, 1901–39

	<i>LSACPU</i>	<i>LSACPU</i>	<i>LSACPU</i>	<i>LSACPU^a</i>
	<i>Model 11</i>	<i>Model 12</i>	<i>Model 13</i>	<i>Model 14</i>
Intercept	-1.0328* (0.3412)	-1.0306* (0.3250)	-1.0204* (0.3178)	-1.0514* (0.3156)
LRPCJPU (-1)	0.2799* (0.0897)	0.2800* (0.0883)	0.2771* (0.0863)	0.2863* ^b
LRYCJPU (-1)	0.0023 (0.0933)			
LRAINPU	0.2181 (0.2027)	0.2179 (0.1995)	0.1701* (0.0473)	0.1699* (0.0445)
RAINPU	-0.0186 (0.0761)	-0.0184 (0.0748)		
LSIRPU	1.1854* (0.2083)	1.1862* (0.2024)	1.2090* (0.1777)	1.1897* (0.1767)
LSACPU (-1)	0.1574 (0.1240)	0.1584 (0.1158)	0.1476 (0.1058)	0.0992 ^c
Adjustment Factor	No diff. from 1	No diff. from 1	No diff. from 1	No diff. from 1
Expectation Factor				No diff. from 1
R-Squared	0.8430	0.8430	0.8427	
R-Bar Squared	0.8135	0.8192	0.8241	
DW	2.2654	2.2683	2.2519	
H	-1.3101§	-1.2127§	-1.0479§	
RSS	0.7261	0.7261	0.7275	0.7214
F	28.631	35.430	45.529	32.389
Log likelihood	22.342	22.341	22.305	21.400
Observations	39	39	39	38

Note: While estimating, we found that the risk proxies — the variance in relative prices and yields—were consistently insignificant; moreover, their inclusion affected other coefficients. These were omitted. a: Non-linear least squares. b: Product terms where each term is statistically significant but with different standard errors. c: Involves two coefficients, where one is statistically insignificant. §: No first order autocorrelation.

in sowing season precipitation tended to increase the share of area under cotton by 0.17 per cent. Fourth, the data suggests that the canal colony farmers adjusted acreage very quickly. In all the estimating models, the acreage adjustment coefficient was statistically no different from unity—implying that the entire adjustment process occurred within a single season. Finally, it would seem that the farmers of the region had static price expectations. When the expectation factor was explicitly introduced

(Model 14), its coefficient was found to be statistically different from zero, but no different from unity. Figures E and F plot the observed versus estimated share of cotton acreage with, respectively, only partial adjustment and with adaptive expectations.

In many respects, there was little in common between a cotton cultivator in the canal colonies and a jute growing peasant in east Bengal. Between 60 and 80 per cent of the farmers in west Punjab owned an average of 25 acres, or one 'square' of irrigated land; the average holding size in east Bengal was just a little over three acres. The annual income of a Punjabi farmer was far greater than his Bengali counterpart. Despite these, and many other differences, the results show that they shared an important common attribute: highly sensitive and market oriented responses to the slightest change in prices.

Cotton versus bajra (millet), the dry districts, Madras

Finally, we examine the acreage response of cotton in the dry districts of Madras Presidency—the region analysed by Washbrook (1978) and Baker (1983).¹² Only the specifications that gave sensible results are reported in Table 4. The data are from *Season and Crop Reports, Agricultural Statistics of British India*, and Narain (1965). The series are labelled as:

LSACMA	Log of the share of area under cotton (i.e. area under cotton divided by area under cotton and its substitute crop, <i>bajra</i>) in the dry districts.
LRPCBMA	Log of the relative price of cotton to <i>bajra</i> .
LYCBMA	Log of the relative yield of cotton to <i>bajra</i> .
LRAINMA	Log of sowing season rainfall.

Table 4 shows that the dry districts, too, were sensitive to changes in relative prices. Depending on the specification, a one per cent change in the relative price of cotton to *bajra* led to a 0.18 per cent to 0.22 per cent change in the share of area allocated to cotton. Since the dry districts rarely received adequate rainfall, least of all floods, the gamma type specification does not work. Under a monotonic specification, all else remaining the same, a percentage change in rainfall affected the share of acreage under cotton by 0.07 to 0.09 per cent. Furthermore, it would seem that a little over 60 per cent of the acreage adjustment to relative price changes occurred within a year. Finally, unlike in Bengal and the Punjab, cultivation

¹² D.A. Washbrook, 'Economic Development and Social Stratification in Rural Madras: The Dry Region, 1878–1929', in Dewey and Hopkins. eds., *The Imperial Impact*, London, 1978, and B. Robert, 'Economic Change and Agrarian Organization in 'Dry' South India, 1880–1940', *Modern Asian Studies*, 1983.

FIGURE 5: OBSERVED AND ESTIMATED SHARE OF AREA UNDER COTTON, CANAL COLONIES OF PUNJAB, 1901–39, PARTIAL ADJUSTMENT

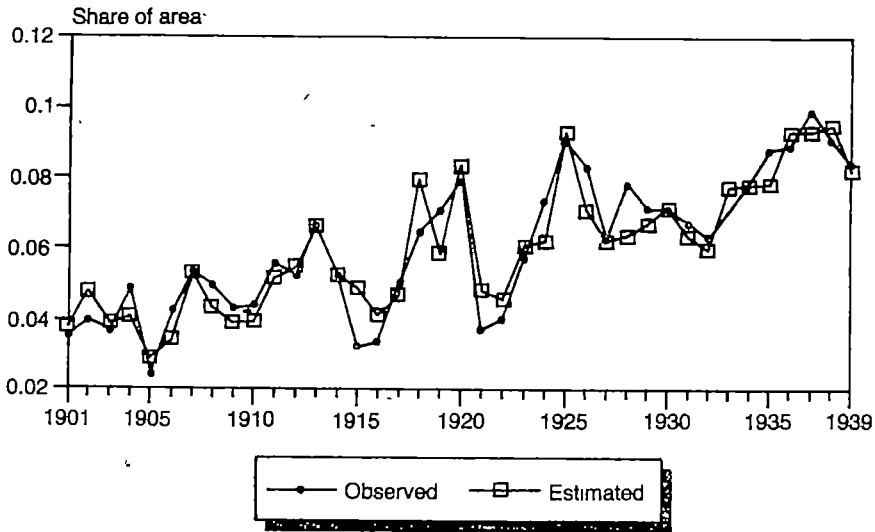


FIGURE 6: SHARE OF AREA UNDER COTTON IN THE CANAL COLONIES OF PUNJAB, 1902–39, WITH ADAPTIVE EXPECTATIONS

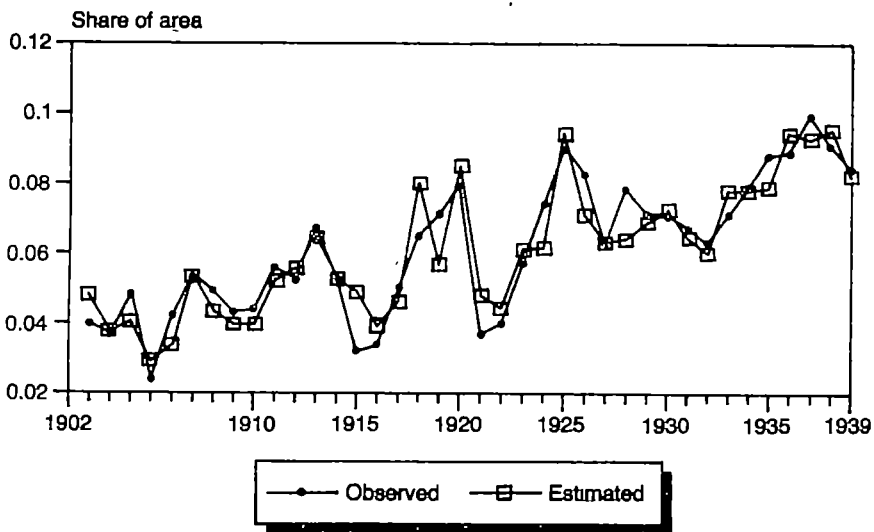


Table 4

Response of the Share of Area under Cotton, Dry Districts of Madras, 1901-37

	LSACMA	LSACMA*
	Model 15	Model 16
Intercept	-0.5993* (0.1727)	-0.7078* (0.1542)
LRPCBMA (-1)	0.1777* (0.0584)	0.2185* ^b
LYCBMA (-1)	0.1093* (0.0461)	0.0997* (0.0378)
LRAINMA	0.0718* (0.0348)	0.0893* (0.0305)
LSACMA (-1)	0.3868* (0.1354)	0.2220 ^b
Adjustment Factor	0.6132*	0.6376*
Expectation Factor		1.1404 (0.2295) stat. no different from 1
R-Square	0.6207	
R-Bar Square	0.5733	
DW	1.7633	
H	1.2691§	
RSS	0.2215	0.1807
F	13.092	10.300
Log likelihood	42.189	44.223
Observations	37	36

Note: a: Non-linear least squares; b: Product terms where each is statistically significant but with different standard errors. Figures in parentheses give the standard errors.

decision of farmers in the dry districts were contingent on the previous year's relative yield of the competing crops. One per cent increase in relative yield in the previous year, *ceteris paribus*, led to a 0.1 per cent increase in the share of area under cotton. Figures G and H plot the share of area under cotton.

In concluding this section, it is quite clear that farmers from three distinct regions, and of varying economic status, responded very quickly to relative prices, and their responses were not very different from those of commercial crop cultivators in many other parts of the world.¹³ From these elasticities, can one infer that the peasants were 'free' economic agents, or were forced into commercial crop cultivation by the pressure of indebtedness? To answer this, we turn to Washbrook (1978) and Robert (1983).

¹³ See J.R. Behrman, *Supply Responses in Underdeveloped Agriculture. A Case Study of Four Major Annual Crops in Thailand, 1937-1963*, North Holland, Amsterdam, 1968 for acreage responses in Thailand.

FIGURE 7: SHARE OF AREA UNDER COTTON, DRY DISTRICTS OF MADRAS, 1902-37, PARTIAL ADJUSTMENT

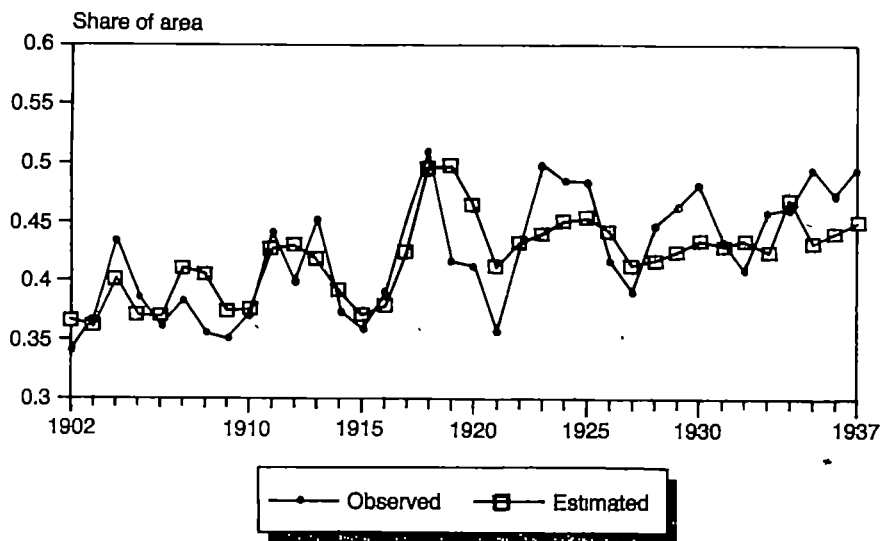
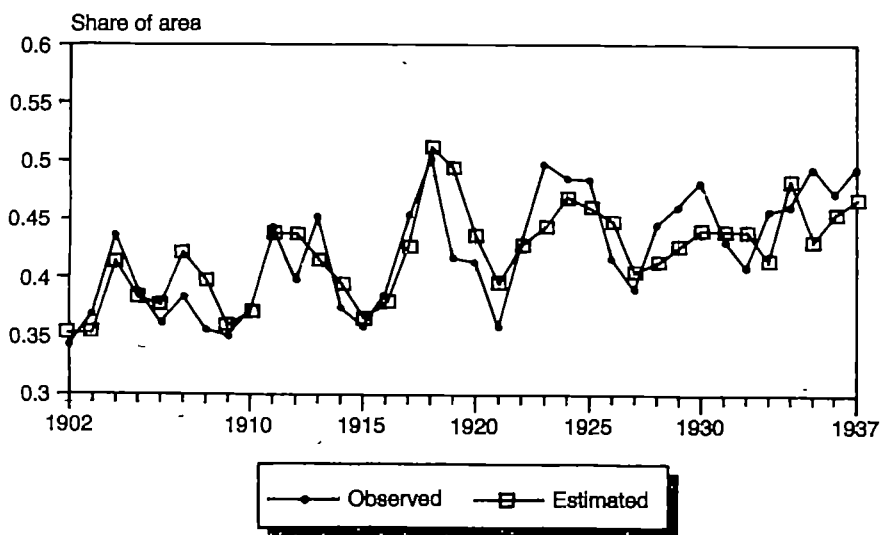


FIGURE 8: SHARE OF AREA UNDER COTTON, DRY DISTRICTS OF MADRAS, 1902-37, ADJUSTMENT AND ADAPTIVE EXPECTATIONS



4 : The Rashomon Effect

Washbrook (1978) and Robert (1983) have both used some quantitative techniques to comment on the nature of agrarian production in the dry districts of Madras. Washbrook focuses on the period 1878–1929. According to him, this was an area with poor rainfall, low water tables, total absence of irrigation, and poor soil. Moreover, 85 per cent of peasant households had less than four acres of land, when 'eight acres of medium-quality dry land were required to keep a family through a good agricultural season.'¹⁴ Washbrook then shows how the poorer peasants got inevitably enmeshed in debt-peonage to wealthier cultivators—the latter accounting for less than 10 per cent of rural households, but owning 50 to 100 acres of land per family, and paying 57 per cent of the land revenue.¹⁵ Given the critical need for credit, the rural magnates—or *pedda ryots*—charged monopolistic prices; crops were hypothecated at low values and, quite often, exorbitant interest costs were adjusted against never ending labour services.¹⁶ In such a situation, Washbrook claims that the gains from cotton cultivation accrued entirely to the rural rich.

In most part, Washbrook's story is 'political economy' in its approach. Towards the end, however, he tries to clinch his argument by moving into the realms of statistics. He finds that during 1885–1914 there was a high partial correlation between acreage under cotton in the dry districts and the lagged price in Bombay. The coefficients were:

Bellary	0.694
Coimbatore	0.579
Tinnevely	0.44. ¹⁷

To Washbrook, these coefficients were sure signs of agrarian exploitation. He claims that the response was more muted in other cotton growing regions in India because of the 'safety-first' principle followed by independent small peasants. Poor (but economically free) peasants would first allocate acreage necessary for foodgrain to meet their subsistence need, and then apportion land for non-food crops. The indebted peasants of the dry districts did not have the freedom to exercise this option; instead, they were driven by their creditors to maximize the area under cash crops. Hence, Washbrook's claim that the high partial correlation coefficients in Bellary, Coimbatore, and Tinnevely were indices of debt-bondage.

Robert (1983) attempts to disprove all of Washbrook's contentions.

¹⁴ Washbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 72–75

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Using the data for Bellary for 1913-40, he estimates a supply response function where the acreage under cotton (A_c) is functionally related to (1) six month lagged price of cotton (P_c), (2) six month lagged price of *jowar*, thought of as the substitute crop (P_j), (3) six month lagged price of groundnut (P_g), (4) average rainfall (R). He finds:

$$A_c = 753.73* + 199.07*P_c - 53.61*P_j - 2.04*P_g - 5.94*R,$$

R-Bar Square: 0.37; DW: 2.28.

To Robert, these coefficients were the 'ultimate signs of economic freedom in the countryside:

If farmers were commanded to grow cotton, we should not expect any significant relationship between the acres grown under cotton and its competitors, *jowar*, a food crop, and groundnut, a cash crop. The relative price of competing crops...would not be of primary concern of a monopolist magnate who 'controlled' farm prices [*sic*]. On the other hand, relative prices as well as non-price factors would be important to a market oriented small farmer, as his well-being depended on reasoned cropping decisions sensitive to yearly price and climate changes. Therefore, if the farmer's cropping decisions were independently determined ... then competitive prices as well as non-price factors (rainfall) should possess appropriate signs and be statistically significant determinates of annual variation in cotton acreage.¹⁸

Armed with his regression result, Robert rejects Washbrook's debt-peonage thesis, in favour of an agrarian structure that was dotted by debt free, independent, market-oriented small peasants. Thus, we have a Rashomon-like picture: the story of high supply responsiveness being explained by diametrically opposite discourses.

Before going any further it is necessary to address a few quantitative issues. First, if sowing and harvesting periods are considered important, then *jowar* was not a substitute to cotton in the dry districts of Madras; *bajra* was. Second, Robert needs to explain why his coefficient with respect to rainfall has a negative sign. Is this due to some profound agronomic reason, or is it simply a misspecification? Third, the way in which the model is formulated leaves much to be desired. There is no adjustment or expectation factor—implying that the short and long run behaviour of farmers were identical. As such, the model specification and, hence, the estimates, seem flawed.

These are, however, minor issues. A more important criticism concerns

¹⁸ Robert, *op. cit.*, p 77.

Robert's understanding of economics. Consider the quote: 'If farmers were commanded to grow cotton, we should not expect any significant relationship between the acres grown under cotton and its competitors.' This implies that the people who did the commanding were unconcerned about prices and profits. There is nothing in economic theory that has ever said that a monopolist looks askance at prices; and, it is very difficult to understand why monopolistic farmers should be any less responsive to prices than smaller peasants. Besides, what does one mean by monopolistic farmers? Theory tells us that to carry that label, the farmers have to be price setters. However large the *pedda ryots* may have been in their villages, they were very small suppliers of cotton in the Bombay cotton market, and had to take prices as given, instead of setting prices. Robert belabours a peculiar notion that relative prices is of no importance to large farmers, and his entire conclusion and his refutation of Washbrook hinges on this premise. In today's context, this would be similar to saying that a large, privately owned firm does not care about prices of its products or its revenue, but that small firms do. One can accept a hypothesis that smaller farmers might show greater price responsiveness than their larger counterparts, but this can neither be proved nor disproved using region-wise, time-series data.

A more substantive critique relates to the inferences drawn by Washbrook and, particularly, Robert from their coefficients. Both use purely time-series data of particular districts and regions. The data only tell us how an area—consisting of farmers with varying land, income, and credit endowments—reacted to changes in relative prices, rainfall, and irrigation. These do not say anything about whether poorer or more indebted peasants reacted differently than their wealthier counterparts. Although this is precisely the issue which both authors wish to analyse, they opt for a tool that can never allow them to conduct such an analysis. In simple terms, an examination of who gained and lost through commercialisation, and how differential availability and terms credit affected cropping decisions and incomes are 'within-region' or cross-sectional issues that can never be addressed by examining time-series data.

An example suffices to prove this analytical point. Consider the mean jute-to-autumn rice price ratio, and the absolute prices for the period 1926 to 1934.

	<i>Jute</i>	<i>Autumn Rice</i>	<i>Price Ratio</i>
Average 1926–30	8.81	6.83	1.301
Average 1930–34	3.72	3.80	1.053
Percentage fall	57.8	44.4	19.1

Although the depression resulted in a dramatic drop in prices of both

crops, the price ratio did not decline by the same amount. Thus, while the countryside reacted to fairly similar relative price signals, the absolute prices fell to a point where a large number of peasants went into deficits and spiralling indebtedness, and many were forced to sell part of their land to meet the debts.¹⁹ Despite careful specification and estimation, none of the jute regressions in this paper can be used to strengthen (or weaken) the story of indebtedness and distress sales during the crisis of the 1930s. But this should not surprise us, for the econometric estimates from time-series data can never be the kernel of a cross-sectional discourse on debt-peonage, freedom, or un-freedom.

The Rashomon effect in the dry districts of Madras reduces to a case of two authors making invalid inferences. By using inappropriate methods, they have tried to use coefficients to answer questions that cannot even be posed, leave alone answered, with time-series, district level data. Without doubt, the region responded fairly quickly to price changes. Whether this was largely due to farmers cultivating out of their free will, or being oppressed by the *pedda ryots* is an important question that needs to be examined. But, given the state of data, time-series supply response functions are not the appropriate analytical tools. Until one gets access to detailed farm-size wise data in the colonial period, who gained and lost through commercialisation can only be answered by other historical and economic methods.

5: Conclusion

This article was written with three purposes in mind, all of which seem to be important at this juncture of Indian economic historiography. First, there is an urgent need to get a clear picture of acreage responses in various parts of areas for different cash crops during the last fifty years of the *raj*. Too much has been written on commercialisation without properly addressing this issue. We have found that geographically separate and highly dissimilar regions showed a great degree of responsiveness to relative prices, rainfall, and irrigation. This is not surprising. If one's livelihood depends on prices, then one responds to them very quickly, and this is no less true for Indian peasants. Second, if supply responses have to be estimated, these need to be modelled carefully. Quantitative methods should be accompanied by statistical rigour, especially in an era where econometrics has advanced rapidly. One can no longer throw in a few variables, look at the best coefficient of determination, and then select the explanatory model. Instead, one has to derive models that are consistent with economic theory, estimate them in econometrically appropriate ways, and make only statistically permissible inferences. Econometrics has well defined bounds of sensible

¹⁹ See Omkar Goswami, *Industry, Trade, and Peasant Society: The Jute Economy of Eastern India, 1900–1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, Chapter 6.

talk and, if historians use regressions, they should be aware of these bounds. Finally, one should be careful of the abuses of econometrics. In particular, it is important to remember that not all economic stories can be told or proved by statistically significant coefficients; and quite often the answers can be found in the political economy approach.

APPENDIX: The Regression Results

Model 1

LS // Dependent Variable is LAJUB

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 7:51

SMPL range: 1903-1939

Number of observations: 37

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	3.3332226	0.6596622	5.0529237	0.000
LRPJR (-1)	0.5296097	0.0743656	7.1217045	0.000
LVARP (-1)	-0.0043762	0.0065522	-0.6679003	0.510
LYDJRB (-1)	-0.0525685	0.2230589	-0.2356711	0.815
LVARYD (-1)	-0.0162843	0.0081394	-2.0006775	0.055
LRAINB	0.3316014	0.1361888	2.4348649	0.022
RAINB	-0.0696054	0.0293957	-2.3678746	0.025
LSIRBN	-0.1652541	0.0728268	-2.2691399	0.031
LAJUB (-1)	0.5656195	0.0841593	6.7208224	0.000
R-squared	0.821507	Mean of dependent var	7.578467	
Adjusted R-squared	0.770510	S.D. of dependent var	0.221833	
S.E. of regression	0.106270	Sum of squared resid	0.316211	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.790611	F-statistic	16.10866	
Log likelihood	35.60116			

Model 2

LS // Dependent Variable is LAJUB

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 7:52

SMPL range: 1903-1939

Number of observations: 37

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	3.3894405	0.6413012	5.2852548	0.000
LRPJR (-1)	0.5238214	0.0666788	7.8558940	0.000
LVARYD (-1)	-0.0163012	0.0069945	-2.3305719	0.027
LRAINB	0.3279252	0.1147585	2.8575235	0.008
RAINB	-0.0690611	0.0244397	-2.8257751	0.008
LSIRBN	-0.1780306	0.0615120	-2.8942418	0.007
LAJUB (-1)	0.5573635	0.0816506	6.8262054	0.000
R-squared	0.817255	Mean of dependent var	7.578467	
Adjusted R-squared	0.780705	S.D. of dependent var	0.221833	
S.E. of regression	0.103882	Sum of squared resid	0.323745	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.826165	F-statistic	22.36046	
Log likelihood	35.16553			

Model 3

LS // Dependent Variable is LAJUB

Date: 8–10–1990 / Time: 7:53

SMPL range: 1903–1939

Number of observations: 37

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	3.3260467	0.6205869	5.3595185	0.000
LRPJRB (-1)	0.5809009	0.0720160	8.0662722	0.000
DRPJRB (-1)	-0.0773254	0.0436173	-1.7728133	0.087
LVARYD (-1)	-0.0143032	0.0068507	-2.0878507	0.046
LRAINB	0.3530173	0.1117671	3.1585093	0.004
RAINB	-0.0734079	0.0237380	-3.0924246	0.004
LSIRBN	-0.1820544	0.0594695	-3.0613048	0.005
LAJUB (-1)	0.5630143	0.0789463	7.1316115	0.000
R-squared	0.835123	Mean of dependent var	7.578467	
Adjusted R-squared	0.795325	S.D. of dependent var	0.221833	
S.E. of regression	0.100360	Sum of squared resid	0.292090	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.855652	F-statistic	20.98410	
Log likelihood	37.06909			

Model 4

LS // Dependent Variable is LSAJUB

Date: 8–10–1990 / Time: 8:38

SMPL range: 1903–1939

Number of observations: 37

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	-0.4048362	0.1296513	-3.1225007	0.004
LRPJRB (-1)	0.4319772	0.0594433	7.2670501	0.000
LVARP (-1)	-0.0031041	0.0052532	-0.5908855	0.559
LYDJRB (-1)	-0.0671462	0.1782303	-0.3767382	0.709
LVARYD (-1)	-0.0130646	0.0065237	-2.0026299	0.055
LRAINB	0.2915024	0.1089586	2.6753495	0.012
RAINB	-0.0594402	0.0234853	-2.5309563	0.017
LSIRBN	-0.1148875	0.0585522	-1.9621401	0.060
LSAJUB (-1)	0.5308413	0.0887517	5.9811960	0.000
R-squared	0.819691	Mean of dependent var	-0.843501	
Adjusted R-squared	0.768174	S.D. of dependent var	0.176464	
S.E. of regression	0.084964	Sum of squared resid	0.202130	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.786077	F-statistic	15.91108	
Log likelihood	43.87985			

Model 5

LS // Dependent Variable is LSAJUB

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 8.40

SMPL range: 1903-1939

Number of observations: 37

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>STD Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	- 0.4211583	0.1246815	- 3.3778735	0.002
LRPJRB (-1)	0.4239187	0.0533485	7.9462150	0.000
LVARYD (-1)	- 0.0125933	0.0056159	- 2.2424387	0.032
LRAINB	0.2810507	0.0919188	3.0575973	0.005
RAINB	- 0.0572156	0.0195461	- 2.9272186	0.006
LSIRBN	- 0.1293913	0.0495507	- 2.6112882	0.014
LSAJUB (-1)	0.5204755	0.0859403	6.0562467	0.000
R-squared	0.815182	Mean of dependent var	-0.843501	
Adjusted R-squared	0.778218	S D. of dependent var	0.176464	
S.E. of regression	0.083103	Sum of squared resid	0.207185	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.821955	F-statistic	22.05363	
Log likelihood	43.42294			

Model 6

LS // Dependent Variable is LSAJUB

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 8:41

SMPL range: 1903-1939

Number of observations: 37

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>STD. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	- 0.4361170	0.1180299	- 3.6949706	0.001
LRPJRB (-1)	0.4778335	0.0563410	8.4810943	0.000
DRPJRB (-1)	- 0.0731257	0.0341171	- 2.1433733	0.041
LVARYD (-1)	- 0.0107133	0.0053790	- 1.9917022	0.056
LRAINB	0.3045838	0.0875540	3.4788122	0.002
RAINB	- 0.0612962	0.0185688	- 3.3010312	0.003
LSIRBN	- 0.1332790	0.0468603	- 2.8441766	0.008
LSAJUB (-1)	0.5254725	0.0812466	6.4676269	0.000
R-squared	0.840456	Mean of dependent var	-0.843501	
Adjusted R-squared	0.801946	S D. of dependent var	0.176464	
S.E. of regression	0.078532	Sum of squared resid	0.178852	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.878546	F-statistic	21.82403	
Log likelihood	46.14342			

Model 7

SYS - Iterative SUR // Dependent Variable is LAJUB

Date: 8–10–1990 / Time: 8:00

SMPL range: 1904 – 1939

Number of observations: 36

System: JUTENLS. BAK - Equation 1 of 1

$$\text{LAJUB} = (\text{C}(1) * \text{C}(10)) + (\text{C}(2) * \text{C}(10) * \text{LRPJRB}(-1)) + (\text{C}(3) * \text{LYDJRB}(-1)) - (\text{C}(3) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LYDJRB}(-2)) + (\text{C}(4) * \text{LVARP}(-1)) - (\text{C}(4) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LVARP}(-2)) + (\text{C}(5) * \text{LVARYD}(-1)) - (\text{C}(5) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LVARYD}(-2)) + (\text{C}(6) * \text{LRAINB}) - (\text{C}(6) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LRAINB}(-1)) - (\text{C}(7) * \text{RAINB}) + (\text{C}(7) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{RAINB}(-1)) + (\text{C}(8) * \text{LSIRBN}) - (\text{C}(8) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LSIRBN}(-1)) + ((\text{C}(9) + 1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LAJUB}(-1)) - (\text{C}(9) * (1 - \text{C}(10)) * \text{LAJUB}(-2))$$

Convergence achieved after 9 iterations

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std Error</i>	<i>T-Stat</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C (1)	7.0700679	0.9004470	7.8517314	0.000
C (10)	0.3538887	0.1039764	3.4035476	0.002
C (2)	1.4439850	0.4843932	2.9810183	0.006
C (3)	-0.0255042	0.1854559	-0.1375215	0.892
C (4)	-0.0114057	0.0044380	-2.5700254	0.016
C (5)	-0.0149622	0.0058852	-2.5423258	0.017
C (6)	0.3677822	0.1129464	3.2562534	0.003
C (7)	0.0646366	0.0231303	2.7944565	0.010
C (8)	-0.1020707	0.1200944	-0.8499211	0.403
C (9)	0.0143381	0.1213216	0.1181829	0.907

Unweighted Statistics

R-squared	0.845759	Mean of dependent var	7.579166
Adjusted R-squared	0.792368	S.D. of dependent var	0.224939
S.E. of regression	0.102497	Sum of squared resid	0.273148
Durbin-Watson stat	1.552152	F-statistic	15.84080
Log likelihood	36.78092		

Model 8

SYS - Iterative SUR // Dependent Variable is LAJUB

Date: 8–10–1990 / Time: 8:14

SMPL range: 1904 – 1939

Number of observations: 36

System: JUTNLS2 - Equation 1 of 1

$$\text{LAJUB} = (\text{C}(1) * \text{C}(9)) + (\text{C}(2) * \text{C}(9) * \text{LRPJRB}(-1)) + (\text{C}(3) * \text{LVARP}(-1)) - (\text{C}(3) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LVARP}(-2)) + (\text{C}(4) * \text{LVARYD}(-1)) - (\text{C}(4) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LVARYD}(-2)) + (\text{C}(5) * \text{LRAINB}) - (\text{C}(5) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LRAINB}(-1)) - (\text{C}(6) * \text{RAINB}) + (\text{C}(6) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{RAINB}(-1)) + (\text{C}(7) * \text{LSIRBN}) - (\text{C}(7) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LSIRBN}(-1)) + (\text{C}(8) + 1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LAJUB}(-1) - (\text{C}(8) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LAJUB}(-2))$$

Convergence achieved after 10 iterations

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C (1)	7.0933122	0.8960621	7.9160940	0.000
C (9)	0.3492357	0.1033315	3.3797608	0.002

Model 8 (Contd.)

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C (2)	1.4610258	0.4887959	2.9890303	0.006
C (3)	-0.0113713	0.0044264	-2.5689662	0.016
C (4)	-0.0145607	0.0051666	-2.8182623	0.009
C (5)	0.3605971	0.1014575	3.5541679	0.001
C (6)	0.0630593	0.0204776	3.0794296	0.005
C (7)	-0.1044481	0.1184383	-0.8818775	0.386
C (8)	0.0097706	0.1203841	0.0811623	0.936

Unweighted Statistics

R-squared	0.845682	Mean of dependent var	7.579166
Adjusted R-squared	0.799958	S.D. of dependent var	0.224939
S.E. of regression	0.100606	Sum of squared resid	0.273285
Durbin-Watson stat	1.550286	F-statistic	18.49535
Log likelihood	36.77189		

Model 9

SYS - Iterative SUR // Dependent Variable is LSAJUB

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 8:49

SMPL range: 1904 - 1939

Number of observations: 36

System: JUTNLSIS - Equation 1 of 1

$$\text{LSAJUB} = (C(1) * C(10)) + (C(2) * C(10) * \text{LRPJRB}(-1)) + (C(3) * \text{LYDJRB}(-1)) - (C(3) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{LYDJRB}(-2)) + (C(4) * \text{LVARP}(-1)) - (C(4) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{LVARP}(-2)) + (C(5) * \text{LVARYD}(-1)) - (C(5) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{LVARYD}(-2)) + (C(6) * \text{LRAINB}) - (C(6) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{LRAINB}(-1)) - (C(7) * \text{RAINB}) + (C(7) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{RAINB}(-1)) + (C(8) * \text{LSIRBN}) - (C(8) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{LSIRBN}(-1)) + ((C(9) + 1 - C(10)) * \text{LSAJUB}(-1)) - (C(9) * (1 - C(10)) * \text{LSAJUB}(-2))$$

Convergence achieved after 11 iterations

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C (1)	-1.2820402	0.2447472	-5.2382221	0.000
C (10)	0.3453015	0.0876554	3.9393074	0.001
C (2)	1.2297232	0.3579535	3.4354272	0.002
C (3)	-0.0156920	0.1399327	-0.1121395	0.912
C (4)	-0.0105056	0.0033465	-3.1392345	0.004
C (5)	-0.0128537	0.0044266	-2.9037153	0.007
C (6)	0.2919170	0.0845370	3.4531281	0.002
C (7)	0.0519621	0.0173512	2.9947295	0.006
C (8)	-0.0546473	0.0901161	-0.6064099	0.550
C (9)	-0.0544167	0.1085110	-0.5014852	0.620

Unweighted Statistics

R-squared	0.860379	Mean of dependent var	-0.844488
Adjusted R-squared	0.812049	S.D. of dependent var	0.178863
S.E. of regression	0.077543	Sum of squared resid	0.156336
Durbin-Watson stat	1.782662	F-statistic	17.80208
Log likelihood	46.82499		

Model 10

SYS - Iterative SUR // Dependent Variable is LSAJUB

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 8:53

SMPL range: 1904 – 1939

Number of observations: 36

System: JUTNLS2S - Equation 1 of 1

$$\text{LSAJUB} = (\text{C}(1) * \text{C}(9)) + (\text{C}(2) * \text{C}(9) * \text{LRPJRB}(-1)) + (\text{C}(3) * \text{LVARP}(-1)) - (\text{C}(3) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LVARP}(-2)) + (\text{C}(4) * \text{LVARYD}(-1)) - (\text{C}(4) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LVARYD}(-2)) + (\text{C}(5) * \text{LRAINB}) - (\text{C}(5) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LRAINB}(-1)) - (\text{C}(6) * \text{RAINB}) + (\text{C}(6) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{RAINB}(-1)) + (\text{C}(7) * \text{LSIRBN}) - (\text{C}(7) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LSIRBN}(-1)) + ((\text{C}(8) + 1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LSAJUB}(-1)) - (\text{C}(8) * (1 - \text{C}(9)) * \text{LSAJUB}(-2))$$

Convergence achieved after 7 iterations

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C(1)	-1.2915892	0.2411970	-5.3549134	0.000
C(9)	0.3428117	0.0869797	3.9412833	0.001
C(2)	1.2370469	0.3622430	3.4149645	0.002
C(3)	-0.0104790	0.0033370	-3.1402777	0.004
C(4)	-0.0126160	0.0038894	-3.2436673	0.003
C(5)	0.2877291	0.0760369	3.7840747	0.001
C(6)	0.0510305	0.0153801	3.3179647	0.003
C(7)	-0.0554505	0.0891806	-0.6217777	0.539
C(8)	-0.0567342	0.1077941	-0.5263200	0.603

Unweighted Statistics

R-squared	0.860333	Mean of dependent var	-0.844488
Adjusted R-squared	0.818950	S.D. of dependent var	0.178863
S.E. of regression	0.076106	Sum of squared resid	0.156388
Durbin-Watson stat	1.776985	F-statistic	20.78959
Log likelihood	46.81900		

Model 11

LS // Dependent Variable is LSACPU

Date: 8-13-1990 / Time: 11:39

SMPL range: 1901 – 1939

Number of observations: 39

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	-1.0327641	0.3412076	-3.0267912	0.005
LRPCJPU (-1)	0.2799179	0.0897226	3.1198130	0.004
LRYCJPU (-1)	0.0022913	0.0932867	0.0245624	0.981
LRAINPU	0.2181121	0.2026623	1.0762392	0.290
RAINPU	-0.0186309	0.0760917	-0.2448485	0.808
LSIRPU	1.1853887	0.2083086	5.6905420	0.000
LSACPU (-1)	0.1574521	0.1240209	1.2695605	0.213
R-squared	0.842972	Mean of dependent var	-2.854032	
Adjusted R-squared	0.813529	S.D. of dependent var	0.348837	
S.E. of regression	0.150635	Sum of squared resid	0.726114	
Durbin-Watson stat	2.265402	F-statistic	28.63089	
Log likelihood	22.34180			

Model 12

LS // Dependent Variable is LSACPU

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 11:40

SMPL range. 1901 - 1939

Number of observations: 39

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	-1.0306333	0.3249603	-3.1715672	0.003
LRPCJPU (-1)	0.2799671	0.0883315	3.1695054	0.003
LRAINPU	0.2179446	0.1994555	1.0926978	0.282
RAINPU	-0.0184486	0.0745732	-0.2473892	0.806
LSIRPU	1.1862228	0.2023861	5.8611876	0.000
LSACPU (-1)	0.1584202	0.1157965	1.3680920	0.181
R-squared	0.842969	Mean of dependent var		-2.854032
Adjusted R-squared	0.819176	S.D. of dependent var		0.348837
S.E. of regression	0.148337	Sum of squared resid		0.726127
Durbin-Watson stat	2.268251	F-statistic		35.42993
Log likelihood	22.34143			

Model 13

LS // Dependent Variable is LSACPU

Date: 8-10-1990 / Time: 11:41

SMPL range. 1901 - 1939

Number of observations: 39

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C	-1.0203788	0.3178249	-3.2105063	0.003
LRPCJPU (-1)	0.2770521	0.0863250	3.2094082	0.003
LRAINPU	0.1700516	0.0473320	3.5927397	0.001
LSIRPU	1.2090250	0.1776744	6.8047224	0.000
LSACPU (-1)	0.1476494	0.1058082	1.3954441	0.172
R-squared	0.842678	Mean of dependent var		-2.854032
Adjusted R-squared	0.824169	S.D. of dependent var		0.348837
S.E. of regression	0.146275	Sum of squared resid		0.727474
Durbin-Watson stat	2.251895	F-statistic		45.52925
Log likelihood	22.30530			

Model 14

SYS // Iterative SUR // Dependent Variable is LSACPU

Date: 8-13-1990 / Time: 12:03

SMPL range: 1902 - 1939

Number of observations: 38

System: COTPUNJ - Equation 1 of 1

$$\text{LSACPU} = (\text{C}(1) + (\text{C}(2) * \text{C}(6) * \text{LRPCPU}(-1)) + (\text{C}(3) * \text{LRAINPU}) - (\text{C}(3) * (1 - \text{C}(6) * \text{LRAINPU}(-1)) + (\text{C}(4) * \text{LSIRPU}) - (\text{C}(4) * (1 - \text{C}(6)) * \text{LSIRPU}(-1)) + ((\text{C}(5) + 1 - \text{C}(6)) * \text{LSACPU}(-1)) - (\text{C}(5) * (1 - \text{C}(6)) * \text{LSACPU}(-2)))$$

Convergence achieved after 4 iterations

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C(1)	-1.0514103	0.3155917	-3.3315525	0.002
C(2)	0.2688938	0.0775495	3.4673821	0.002
C(6)	1.0648478	0.1956136	5.4436300	0.000
C(3)	0.1699249	0.0445019	3.8183739	0.001
C(4)	0.1897320	0.1766521	6.7348885	0.000
C(5)	0.1640274	0.1196355	1.3710592	0.180

Unweighted Statistics

R-squared	0.835006	Mean of dependent var	-2.840989
Adjusted R-squared	0.809225	S.D. of dependent var	0.343747
S.E. of regression	0.150141	Sum of squared resid	0.721355
Durbin-Watson stat	2.136736	F-statistic	32.38919
Log likelihood	21.40034		

Model 15

LS // Dependent Variable is LSACMA

Date: 8-14-1990 / Time: 11:20

SMPL range: 1901 - 1937

Number of observations: 37

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Stat.	2-Tail Sig.
C	-0.5992812	0.1727101	-3.4698667	0.002
LRPCBMA (-1)	0.1776831	0.0584655	3.0391076	0.005
LYCBMA (-1)	0.1093128	0.0460835	2.3720621	0.024
LRAINMA	0.0717527	0.0347986	2.0619415	0.047
LSACMA (-1)	0.3867814	0.1354010	2.8565623	0.007
R-squared	0.620717	Mean of dependent var	-0.874927	
Adjusted R-squared	0.573307	S.D. of dependent var	0.127359	
S.E. of regression	0.083193	Sum of squared resid	0.221474	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.763332	F-statistic	13.09244	
Log likelihood	42.18910			

Model 16

SYS // Iterative SUR // Dependent Variable is LSACMA

Date: 8-14-1990 / Time: 11.25

SMPL range: 1902 - 1937

Number of observations: 36

System: COTMAD1 - Equation 1 of 1

$$\text{LSACMA} = C(1) + (C(2) * C(6) * \text{LRPCBMA}(-1)) + (C(3) * \text{LYCBMA}(-1)) - (C(3) * (1 - C(6)) * \text{LYCBMA}(-2)) + (C(4) * \text{LRAINMA}) - (C(4) * (1 - C(6)) * \text{LRAINMA}(-1)) + ((C(5) + 1 - C(6)) * \text{LSACMA}(-1)) - (C(5) * (1 - C(6)) * \text{LSACMA}(-2))$$

Convergence achieved after 6 iterations

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std Error</i>	<i>T-Stat.</i>	<i>2-Tail Sig.</i>
C (1)	-0.7078309	0.1542328	-4.5893669	0.000
C (2)	0.1916142	0.0455723	4.2046244	0.000
C (6)	1.1403766	0.2295475	4.9679331	0.000
C (3)	0.0997161	0.0377605	2.6407539	0.013
C (4)	0.0892523	0.0304683	2.9293452	0.006
C (5)	0.3624013	0.1594302	2.2731031	0.030
<i>Unweighted Statistics</i>				
R-squared	0.631908	Mean of dependent var	-0.866564	
Adjusted R-squared	0.570559	S.D. of dependent var	0.118416	
S.E. of regression	0.077600	Sum of squared resid	0.180652	
Durbin-Watson stat	1.682460	F-statistic	10.30026	
Log likelihood	44.22282			

The *begar* abolition movements in British Kumaun

Shekhar Pathak

Kumaun University
Nainital

I

Begar generally implies unpaid forced labour, extracted either by landlords or the state. In the agrarian system of British Kumaun,¹ dominated as it was by peasant proprietors, *begar* meant forcible extraction by the state of labour and/or produce without any payment, or with nominal wages. In some respects, of course, *begar* in British Kumaun was the continuation of a practice followed by earlier states. Prior to British occupation, the hill districts of Kumaun had been briefly under Gurkha rule, from 1790 to 1815. Although the British did abolish slavery, in other matters which predominantly included the practice of *begar*, they maintained the prevalent customs. Indeed, under company rule the system of *begar* was regularised by associating it with land settlements.

There were three forms of *begar*, viz, coolie *begar*, coolie *utar*, and coolie *burdayash*. All these were commonly referred to as coolie *begar*. However, coolie *begar* specifically meant forced labour without any payment. Coolie *utar* was different from coolie *begar* in that it carried an obligation of minimum wage payment, although often it was taken without payment. Finally, coolie *burdayash* referred to the extraction of different forms of produce—food, fuel, fodder, etc.—for officials, soldiers, hunters, surveyors, tourists, and their animals. There was a provision for payment but till

¹ British Kumaun comprised the districts of Almora, Nainital, and British Garhwal. Nainital and Almora formed part of the cultural region of 'Kumaun', while British Garhwal constituted the eastern portion of the pre-colonial state of 'Garhwal'. The western portion of Garhwal was, after 1815, reconstituted as the princely state of Tehri Garhwal. In this essay, 'Kumaun' will be taken to include the British portion of Garhwal, which with the districts of Almora and Nainital constituted the Kumaun Division of Northwestern (later United) Provinces. For an introduction to the political and administrative history of the region, see Shekhar Pathak, *Uttarakhand mein Kuli Begar Paratha*, Delhi, 1987 and Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods. Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Delhi, 1989

the end of the last century the produce was generally taken without any payment.²

Every landowner of the hill districts was obliged to render *begar* or compensation in lieu of it. About 85 to 90 per cent of the local population consisted of the peasants (*kashtkars*). Consequently, with the exception of some Brahmins, village heads (*pradhans*), nobles (*thokdars*), and retired soldiers and officials, the whole of Kumaun was subject to the practice of *begar*.

Under British rule, the practice of *begar* evolved in three stages. The first phase obtained from the Anglo Nepal war (1814–15) till the first war of independence (1857); the second phase, from the first war of independence to about 1885; and the third phase from then onwards till 1921. During the first phase, the practice of *begar* was regularised by law. During the second phase it was at its most exploitative form while the third phase witnessed the popular mass movement against the system. This led to a process of reform and concession and finally the practice of *begar* was completely abolished in 1921.

The anti-*begar* movement itself passed through two distinct stages. In the first phase, c. 1890 to 1913, a growing liberal opposition among the Kumaun intelligentsia was juxtaposed with individual and unorganised acts of resistance by the peasants. The second stage, which started during the first World War, saw the opposition to *begar* being transformed by a widespread popular movement.

II

No evidence of any widespread movement against *begar* in Kumaun is available for the nineteenth century. There are several reasons for this. The Company rule, which began in 1815, was less cruel and oppressive than Gurkha rule. Again, due to geographical isolation, Kumaun remained untouched by the numerous tribal and peasant revolts in other parts of the country.

During the eight decades of British rule till 1990, then, there was no organised movement against *begar*. However, there are some indications of individual and collective acts of defiance which stopped short of challenging the *begar* system itself. Although official sources tend to conceal such protests, evidence for it does exist. For example, in 1827 the zamindar of Kali Kumaun refused to make available the slates required for the construction of army barracks.³ Again, in 1820 coolies did not come to Lohaghat when called to do so.⁴ Two years later, a similar incident was

² See, for details, General Administration Department (GAD) file 398 of 1913, Uttar Pradesh State Archives (UPSA), Lucknow. See Shekar Pathak, *Uttarakhand Mein Kul Begar Pratha*, Delhi, 1987, pp 48–90.

³ *Kumaun Records* (UPSA): Miscellaneous Letters received: Series Thirty-six, 1872: 11: 175.

⁴ *Kumaun Records*, Series Forty-two, 1830. 11: 343.

reported from Pithoragarh.⁵ And army battalions faced a lot of problems in obtaining *burdayash* in Almora and Lohaghat in 1837–38.⁶

In 1841, in Lohaghat, coolies refused to serve and to accept what they regarded as low wages.⁷ An Englishman travelling from Someshwar to Almora in 1844 also faced a shortage of coolies.⁸ Occasionally, peasants lodged complaints against the demand of grain by soldiers.⁹ A report of 1855 also spoke of enormous difficulties in getting coolies.¹⁰ The problem became more acute during the rebellion of 1857. Now, the legendary Commissioner of Kumaun, Henry Ramsay, was forced to make prisoners work as coolies outside the jail.¹¹

The incidents mentioned above were by no means part of a popular movement. Yet they do indicate that the practice of *begar* caused enormous difficulties for the peasants. Meanwhile, from the 1860s, the operations of *begar* steadily intensified. First, the Himalaya emerged as a land of sport and adventure for Europeans. More importantly, the expansion of the army and of survey operations, and the establishment of the forest department in the hills, accelerated the oppressive effects of the *begar* system. For officials, like white travellers and sportsmen, took forced labour and provisions as a matter of course.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, local newspapers are a most valuable source of information about the *begar* system and opposition to it. The *Samya Vinod*, set up in Nainital in 1868, was followed three years later by the more enduring *Almora Akhbar*. Almora also witnessed the foundation of a Debating Club in 1870, in which the town's intelligentsia discussed social and political questions. In neighbouring Garhwal, the Garhwal Union was set up in 1901; while the publication of the magazines like *Garhwal Samachar* (from 1902) and *Garhwali* (from 1905), was to provide a major impetus to the development of social consciousness in the region. All these forums, though largely sympathetic to the government, do provide valuable information about the practice of *begar*, the condition of the coolies, and the attitudes of travellers and officials. At the same time, being based in the towns, they do not accurately reflect attitudes to *begar* (including opposition to the system) in the countryside of Kumaun.

The turn of the century also saw the emergence of *begar* as a subject of discussion in the Council. Through the 1890s, questions about the operation of *begar* in Kumaun repeatedly figured in the Provincial Council.¹² A question

⁵ *Kumaun Records*, Series Forty-five, 1832: 1: 137.

⁶ *Kumaun Records*, Series Forty-eight, 1838: 1: 327–28, 375–76.

⁷ *Kumaun Records*, Series Sixty-eight, 1841: 11: 507–9.

⁸ 'Pilgrim', *Notes on Wanderings in the Himalaya*, 1844, p. 105.

⁹ *Kumaun Records*, Series Seventy-seven, 1844: 11: 401, 405.

¹⁰ *Kumaun Records*, Series One hundred and four, 1855: 1: 779.

¹¹ S.A.A. Rizvi, *History of the Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, Volume V, 1960, p. 551.

¹² *Proceedings of the Council of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, 1893, pp. 6–7; 1894, pp. 4–5, 1897, pp. 4–5.

relating to *begar* and *burdayash* was also raised in the Council of the Governor General in 1893.¹³ After an unsuccessful attempt to raise the issue in the 1887 session of the Indian National Congress, a resolution against *begar* was passed in the 1893 Congress session.¹⁴ These developments seem to have affected the land settlement of E.K. Pauw, one markedly more liberal in its imposition of *begar*. At the same time, the Bania Nali system was introduced, which helped mitigate the incidence of *burdayash*.¹⁵

This heightened urban consciousness was matched by independent peasant initiatives against *begar*. In a major incident in 1903, villagers of Khatyadi village near Almora collectively refused to serve *begar*. In fact, during Ramsay's tenure itself, villagers of Someshwar had refused to submit to *begar*. Ramsay had crushed the Someshwar valley protests by imposing fines, and the villagers could not go to court. But in this case the villagers of Khatyadi continued their protests by other means, ultimately securing the verdict of the High Court in their favour.¹⁶ In fact, the lower court had fined fourteen out of sixteen striking villagers of Khatyadi Rs. 2 each, with the option of simple imprisonment. However, the peasants, Gopia and others, filed a petition against this decision in the Allahabad High Court, which ruled in their favour. The government then tried to refute the High Court Judgement in the Council, but the Governor refused to give his assent to this.¹⁷

The significance of the High Court verdict could not be realised in the absence of effective leadership and a mass organisation. Moreover, the verdict itself was not widely known in the villages. A more general consciousness had to await the formation of the Kumaun Parishad, in 1916. Meanwhile, Gauridutt Bisth of Giwad, and Mahant Narain Das of Totashilling, presented a memorandum regarding the *begar* and forest issues to Lord Curzon on the latter's visit to Kumaun in 1903.¹⁸ Resenting this appeal, the Deputy Commissioner of Almora, C.A. Sherring, threatened Gauridutt Bisth with arrest.¹⁹

In continuation to this opposition to *begar*, liberal intellectuals held a meeting in Almora in 1907.²⁰ Hari Ram Pandey, a member of the delegation that subsequently met the Deputy Commissioner, claimed that the *Coolie-Burdayash* system was not only illegal, it was a crime.²¹ Several memoranda on the subject were sent to the government. Articles on the problems caused

¹³ *Proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India*, XXX, 1893, pp. 55–56.

¹⁴ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress* (1935), Volume I p. 54.

¹⁵ Dwarkanath Ganguli, *Slavery in the British Dominion*, 1972, p. x.

¹⁶ *Allahabad Law Journal*, 1904, p. 265.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266; V.A. Stowell, *A Manual of the Land Tenures of the Kumaun Division*, 1907, p. 139; Sudha Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kesari*, 1970, p. 28.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28; *Shakti*, Almora, 21 December 1935.

¹⁹ Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kesari*, pp. 28–29.

²⁰ *Almora Akhbar*, 30 November 1907.

²¹ *Garhwali*, July 1907; *Kumaun Kumud*, 10 September 1940.

by the *begar* system were also written in newspapers and journals of the region. The residents of Garhwal's major town, Srinagar, submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner on the issue.²² This delegation, which included Girija Dutt Naithani, demanded the replacement of the *begar* system with a system of permanent coolies, maintained and paid for by the government. They also circulated copies of a pamphlet, 'Begar bardasya bhaion ki appeal' (An appeal of the people affected by *begar*) in the villages.²³

These various memoranda dwelled on the misbehaviour of headmen and petty officials (*patwaris*), the inconvenience to the peasants caused by *begar* etc., while asking for an improvement in the roads and transportation system of the region. The government, in response, did make a declaration in 1907 that there would be no demand for *burdayash* and *begar* without payment.²⁴ But despite the orders of the Deputy Commissioner, officials continued extracting *begar* and *burdayash* as per custom, and without payment.²⁵ And in 1908, Lieutenant Governor Hewett categorically told a meeting of the Kumaun-Rohilkhand Darbar in Bareilly that there could be no change in the coolie *begar* system in Kumaun.²⁶

Hewett's statement was a reflection of the fact that at this time the opposition to *begar* remained confined to some educated urban people, and to a few villages. The urban leadership was not as yet cognisant that the potential mass base of the anti-*begar* movement lay in the peasants of Kumaun, who were the main victims of the system. Sometimes villagers were invited to meetings in the towns which passed resolutions and drafted memoranda to be sent to government. Yet despite the dozens of letters, resolutions and delegations, the provincial Government not only supported the practice of *begar* but refused to acknowledge any criticism of the system.

However, limited in scope though it was, such opposition did force some changes in official attitudes to *begar*. The frequency of official visits began to decline, while it was decided that before such visits, their programme should be published and circulated in advance.²⁷ The need to plan tours carefully was also stressed. Pauw's settlement, as we have already noted, also reflected some concern with minimising the impacts of the system, making it necessary to pay for all materials and goods obtained from the villagers. In addition, bulk supplies of grain were arranged in camps. At the same time, a more systematic attempt by the government to retain the system, while making it more palatable, was its support of the emergence of coolie agencies in Garhwal. Through these agencies, started by the Garhwali lawyer and

²² *Report of the Native Newspapers of the United Provinces*, 1907, part A, p. 603

²³ *Purusharth*, September 1919, pp. 5-6.

²⁴ *Garhwal*, January-February 1913, p. 13

²⁵ *Garhwal Samachar*, January-February 1913, p. 14.

²⁶ See the various writings of Badri Dutt Pande on *begar* in the issues of *Shakti* in the early weeks of 1920.

²⁷ See GAD Proceedings, UPSA, 1916 Volume 103, p. 53. See GAD file 739 of 1920.

reformer Taradutt Gairola, villagers were able to make payments into a common fund from which transport, labour and supplies were arranged, without villagers being involved directly in these tasks.²⁸

In the first century of British rule, then, *begar* was opposed through sporadic protests by peasants and by the petitioning intelligentsia of the towns of Kumaun and Garhwal. This movement, reformist and localised in its nature, was transformed in a few years into a massive upsurge aimed at the abolition of *begar*. One factor in this transformation was the smouldering resentment of the thousand of hill soldiers who returned from service in the First World War. At the same time, local newspapers began to campaign more vigorously against the *begar* system. And most significant of all, a local organisation was set up to cope with the continuing repression as well as the rapidly changing socio-political situation. This was the Kumaun Parishad, set up in 1916, the year which also witnessed the unification of the two streams (Moderate and Extremist) of the Congress party.²⁹

III

We now come to the second and decisive phase of the anti-*begar* movement in Kumaun, which can itself be divided into three phases. The first phase (1913 to 1916) drew upon the intellectual opposition of the earlier period to urge reform and eventual abolition of the *begar* system. The second phase (1916 to 1920) saw the birth of the Kumaun Parishad, the organisation which was to arouse mass opposition against *begar*. The third and culminating phase started in 1920 after the Kashipur session of the Kumaun Parishad, where the government was given an ultimatum to abolish *begar*. When the government refused to act, the people of Kumaun, in a historic strike at Bageshwar on 13–14 January 1921, decided to abolish the system themselves by refusing to give *begar*.

The radicalisation of the movement had however to contend with the lack of unity in popular opposition to the *begar* system. One section apparently held the view that *begar* could continue to be extracted from lower castes like Khasiyas and Doms, while Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas should be exempt. Another section held meanwhile that *begar* should be abolished for everyone, not merely for the higher castes (*savarna*).³⁰ This division also led to a controversy regarding the setting up of coolie agencies. On the one hand, it was held that these agencies were to be welcomed in so far as they minimised the sufferings of the peasantry. The coolie agencies were variously

²⁸ See NWP Council Proceedings, 1918, pp. 61–63; *Shakti*, issues of 23 and 30 March 1920, *Purusharth*, September 1919, p. 6.

²⁹ Shekhar Pathak and Hira Bhakuni, 'Rise and Growth of Kumaun Parishad', *Proceedings of the Forty-eighth session of Indian History Congress*, 1987, pp. 397–403.

³⁰ *Almora Akhbar*, 11 August 1913; *Garhwali*, August 1913; *Garhwal Samachar*, February–March, 1914, p. 5

claiming to be 'labour unions' and an embodiment of *swaraj* and *kamadhenu* for the peasantry.³¹ On the other hand, another section claimed that accepting the coolie agency system was tantamount to accepting *begar*, and the ultimate solution of the *begar* problem lay in the abolition of the system itself, not its mitigation through coolie agencies.³²

In August 1913, a delegation from ten villages and *mohallas* of Almora met the Commissioner of Kumaun.³³ The leader of the delegation, Badri Dutt Joshi, said that *utar* was clearly illegal; hence, forcing anybody to carry a load against his will was an offense, punishable under article 374 of the Indian Penal Code.³⁴ The Commissioner ridiculed this claim, equating the delegation's demand for the abolition of *begar* with asking for the moon.³⁵ A citizens meeting, held under the chairmanship of the retired Deputy Commissioner, Jai Dutt Joshi, then decided to approach the Lieutenant Governor.³⁶ Meanwhile, *Almora Akhbar* also published news and letters about the anti-*begar* sentiments of the peasants.³⁷ However, in the same year (1913), N.C. Stiffe solidified the basis of coolie *utar* through the forest settlement in which large areas of Kumaun were constituted as reserved forests.³⁸

Although the outbreak of the World War and the recruitment of young villagers did not cause widespread discontent, local newspapers continued to highlight local problems, while small organisations began to take shape in the villages. Other significant developments included the assumption of the editorship of *Almora Akhbar* by Badri Dutt Pande (the future hero of *begar* abolition), a visit to Almora by the veteran nationalist, Lala Lajpat Rai, and the setting up of students' fronts. Meanwhile, Kumaun Parishad leaders like Laxmi Dutt Shastri, Hargovind Pant and Badri Dutt Pande began visiting the villages, calling upon the people to understand their problems and fight for their resolution. Frequent visits by local leaders to Congress sessions and the effort of Kumauni students studying in the cities also helped the national movement come to the region. Around 1914-15, Almora became extraordinarily active, through meetings of the Indian Club and Suddha Sahitya Samiti, the anti-*begar* writings of Prem Ballabh Pandey in the *Almora Akhbar*, efforts at social mixing between upper castes and *shilpkars* (artisans), and the foundation of student organisations

³¹ *Garhwal*, issues of October 1912 and June 1920; *Garhwal Samachar*, August-September 1912.

³² *Shakti*, issues of 28 January, 4 February, and 17 July 1919, and of 6 April 1920.

³³ *Almora Akhbar*, 11 August 1913.

³⁴ *Almora Akhbar*, August-September 1913.

³⁵ *Almora Akhbar*, 20 October 1913.

³⁶ *Almora Akhbar*, 29 September 1913.

³⁷ *Almora Akhbar*, 28 July 1913 and 4 and 26 January 1914.

³⁸ *Shakti*, 27 July 1922; *The Leader*, 17, 18 and 20 December 1914.

and the Nayak Sudhar Sabha.³⁹ Meanwhile in Garhwal, different socio-cultural organisations were unified in December 1914 and took the decision to ensure the regular weekly publication of *Garhwali*.⁴⁰ Finally, in 1916 a branch of the Home Rule League was set up in Almora.⁴¹

This burst of activity was related, both directly and indirectly, to the growing consciousness against *begar*. The birth of a local organisation such as the Kumaun Parishad was inevitable in a situation wherein social and political forces were getting organised and the colonial state was reluctant to change its own orientation.⁴² In fact, when the Kumaun Parishad was set up in 1916, the same year the Lieutenant Governor, James Meston, not only described *utar* as compulsory but claimed that the British had brought to an end centuries of maladministration in Kumaun.⁴³

The first session of the Kumaun Parishad was held at Almora in September 1917 under the chairmanship of a retired Deputy Commissioner, Jai Datt Joshi. Two types of personalities participated in this inaugural session of the Parishad. On the one hand there were pro-government retired officials and title holders, and on the other hand, nationalists influenced by Tilak and the Home Rule League. On this occasion, Badri Dutt Pande recited a poem, 'Raja wahi rahenge Sriman George Pancham, pratyek swetcharma raja na ban sakega' (George V will remain the monarch, but every white man cannot be the ruler). This poem, which was aimed directly at the colonial bureaucracy, aroused the dissent of Rai Bahadur Badri Dutt Joshi. Some youths meanwhile walked out of the session.⁴⁴

Now, Laxmi Dutt Shastri was deputed to organise the branches of the Parishad and propagate its views in the villagers.⁴⁵ With the growing activities of the Parishad in the villages, the independent protests by peasants also began coming to the surface. In November 1917, when a peon beat up a *malguzar* of Bironkhal for bringing *burdayash* late, the villagers in turn beat up the peon.⁴⁶ In Berinag, peasants refused to carry the load of a *tehsildar* from Berinag to Thal.⁴⁷ Chamoli and Gangoli also witnessed similar protests in May and October of 1918.⁴⁸ In March of that year, *Almora Akhbar* was compelled by the district authorities to close down. Although

³⁹ *Shakti*, 21 December 1935

⁴⁰ *Garhwali*, November–December 1914, p. 124.

⁴¹ *Shakti*, 23 March 1940; *Uttarakhand Bharati*, Vol. 3, 1978, p. 2; and interviews with M.S. Mehta and G D. Shah

⁴² *Almora Akhbar*, issues of 31 March 1908 and 26 January 1914; *The Leader*, 28 May 1911.

⁴³ See the Lieutenant Governor's speech of 30 September 1916, in GAD file 108 of 1918, UPSA.

⁴⁴ *Shakti*, 15 January 1924. See Shekhar Pathak, *Badri Dutt Pande Aur Unka Yug*, Lucknow, 1982

⁴⁵ Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kesari*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Interviews with Hari Sharma and Mangat Ram Khantwal.

⁴⁷ Interview with Prem Singh Garia.

⁴⁸ Interviews with Mukandi Lal and Mohan Singh Mehta.

holding very mild views for most of its existence, this forty-eight year old news weekly had gained clarity and sharpness in its last few years, playing a crucial role in creating an environment against *begar*. It was widely believed that its criticism of the Deputy Commissioner for firing upon a coolie, was the reason behind its forcible closure. However, the popular feeling against *begar* continued to grow. October 1918 saw the publication of the weekly *Shakti*, a journal which was to play an extraordinary role in the anti-*begar* movement in coming years. (The last editor of *Almora Akhbar* and founder editor of *Shakti*, Badri Dutt Pande played a very important role in the *begar* abolition movement as a campaigning editor and activist-leader of the Kumaun Parishad).

Controversies and differences of opinion persisted even in the second session of the Kumaun Parishad, held in Haldwani in December 1918 under the presidentship of Taradutt Gairola. Some felt that the problem of *utar* was being solved through the formation and work of the coolie agencies.⁴⁹ However, despite opposition by the elders, a resolution moved by Hargovind Pant, which asked for the total abrogation of *begar* within two years, was passed.⁵⁰ The government was warned that if *utar* was not abolished within this time, the people would launch a satyagraha.⁵¹ In the same year, 1918, one of the Parishad's main leaders, Badri Dutt Pande, went to Calcutta to try and persuade Gandhi to visit Kumaun (Gandhi declined the invitation owing to other commitments).⁵²

Meanwhile, two resolutions, one in support of British rule and the other against the *begar* system, were passed together in the meeting of the Garhwal Parishad held at Srinagar in March 1919.⁵³ In the same year, on the occasion of the celebration of the victory of the Allied Powers in the World War, there were protests against *begar* and the Rowlatt Act. Taradutt Gairola, in other respects a liberal reformer with considerable faith in the Raj, even described the *begar* system as a menace (*kalank*). Processions were also taken out in Garhwal and Kumaun after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi.⁵⁴ Anti-*begar* resolutions were passed in public meetings held at Nanda Devi and Banadi Devi in May 1919.⁵⁵ On the other side, the peasants and *malguzars* of Katyur, who had stepped in to give grain to the *patwaris*, began to warn about a mass movement.⁵⁶

Anti-*begar* resolutions were also passed in the Majhera branch of the

⁴⁹ *Shakti*, 14 January 1919.

⁵⁰ *Shakti*, 7 January 1919.

⁵¹ *Shakti*, 15 January 1924.

⁵² Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kesari*, p. 33.

⁵³ *Shakti*, 1 April 1919.

⁵⁴ *Karmbhumi* (Kotdwar), 26 January 1956; *Shakti*, 28 December 1935.

⁵⁵ *Shakti*, issues of 20 May 1919 and 28 December 1935.

⁵⁶ Letter submitted to Deputy Commissioner of Almora by peasants of Katyur, dated 2 June 1919, Mohan Singh Mehta Papers.

Kumaun Parishad and in the thirteenth annual U.P. provincial association meeting, held at Saharanpur in October 1919.⁵⁷ In the meantime, the Commissioner of Kumaun, Percy Wyndham, had issued the report of the sub-committee of the Board of Communications of the United Provinces government. Wyndham was believed to be personally against the practice of *begar*, but the report only suggested some reforms in the provision of labour and provisions, favouring the maintenance of the system itself.⁵⁸

The third session of the Kumaun Parishad was held in December, 1919 at Kotdwar in Garhwal, under the presidentship of Badri Dutt Joshi. Joshi himself termed the difficulties caused by forest laws and *begar* an attack on the higher castes, adding that they also caused great inconvenience to the masses.⁵⁹ The resolution on *begar*, when debated upon, appeared to split the Parishad into two groups. Some members wanted the deletion of the time limit given to the government the previous year for the abolition of *begar*, and of the word *satyagraha* from the resolution. But the resolution was finally passed in its original form, with both groups continuing to co-exist in the Parishad.⁶⁰ The government was still expected to respond favourably to the anti-*begar* sentiments expressed by the Parishad. Among the Parishad's specific demands in this connection were people's representation in the transport committees of the government, publication of the Board of Communications Committee report, and the removal of coolie *utar* in the coming settlement in Garhwal.⁶¹

After returning from that year's Amritsar session of the Congress, the leaders and activists of the Parishad started consolidating their work in the villages. Laxmi Dutt Shastri, Badri Dutt Pande, Hargovind Pant, Mohan Singh Mehta, Mathura Dutt Trivedi, etc., opened units of the Parishad in different places. In their speeches they opposed the coolie agencies and called upon the peasants to organise against *begar*.⁶²

The last few months of 1920 were of great importance in the context of the growing awareness in the villages. In one village, Surna of Patti Kairarao, peasants refused to serve coolies or pay the fine.⁶³ Local representatives in the U.P. political conference, held at Moradabad in October 1920, succeeded in passing a resolution to abolish *begar*. Following this, Mukundi Lal and Hargovind Pant, in articles in *Shakti*, called upon the people not to render *begar* and *burdayash*.⁶⁴ In November 1920, the Garhwal Parishad too started

⁵⁷ *Shakti*, 28 October 1919.

⁵⁸ See GAD file 739 of 1920, UPSCA.

⁵⁹ Issues of *Shakti* from 24 February to 30 March 1920, interviews with Mohan Singh Mehta and Mukundi Lal.

⁶⁰ *Shakti*, 20 January 1920.

⁶¹ *Shakti*, 20 January 1920.

⁶² *Shakti*, issues of 20 April, 11 May and 8 June 1920

⁶³ Police Department (PD) file 1151 of 1921, UPSCA, pp. 83, 85, 87, 181

⁶⁴ *Shakti*, issues of 9 and 30 November 1920.

telling the peasants that the practice of *begar* was illegal.⁶⁵ At the time, the whole of the United Provinces was engulfed by an anti-*begar* movement.

However, the provincial government wrote letters of warning to all Commissioners except the Commissioner of Kumaun. Perhaps in 1920 the United Provinces government saw the problems in Kumaun in isolation from the problems of the rest of the province. Very likely it did not take the growing rural consolidation seriously, believing the Kumaun Parishad to be still dominated by a pro-government, loyalist orientation.⁶⁶

The fourth session of the Parishad was convened in Kashipur in December 1920 under the presidentship of the Almora lawyer, Hargovind Pant. It was, notably, the first session of the organisation not presided over by a Rai Bahadur or former government official. This session also bore visible marks of the countrywide non-cooperation movement. By this time Hargovind Pant himself had emerged as a symbol of the progressive and nationalist elements in the Parishad. Pant not only called for the abolition of coolie *utar*, he wished the anti-*begar* upsurge would assimilate more fully with the non-cooperation movement itself. Despite some dissent, the meeting of the Parishad passed a resolution in favour of non-cooperation. Members stood up and took a pledge that they would not render coolie *utar* and would work to abolish that menace. Pro-government elements tried unsuccessfully to stall this resolution, and ultimately walked out of the meetings.⁶⁷

That sentiments against *begar* were so powerful was primarily on account of the growing peasant consciousness, as expressed by village representatives at the Parishad session. The chairman of the Katyur branch of the Parishad, Shivadutt Pandey, its secretary, Rani Dutt, and Mohan Singh Mehta, Keshavdutt Pandey and others requested the main leaders of the Parishad to come to the Uttarayani fair held at Bageshwar next January. This fair on the banks of the river Saryu was attended annually by thousands of hillmen, making it an ideal venue for propaganda work and for taking the final decision regarding the movement. Senior Parishad leaders such as Hargovind Pant, Badri Dutt Pande and Chiranjilal were quick to recognise the significance of village sentiments in the matter, and resolved to attend the Uttarayani *mela*. Meanwhile, some important Parishad leaders proceeded from Kashipur to that year's Nagpur session of the Congress. They again requested Gandhi to visit Kumaun but this was not deemed possible. Swami Satyadev promised to come to Bageshwar but could not reach.⁶⁸

A major manifestation of village opposition to *begar* was the meeting on 1 January 1921 in the Haru temple of Chami Village (Katyur), quite close

⁶⁵ *Shakti* 30 November 1920.

⁶⁶ See GAD file 694 of 1920, UPSA.

⁶⁷ *Shakti*, 15 January 1924; Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kesari*, pp. 35–36.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37; PD file 1151/1921, pp. 23, 91, 117; interview with Mohan Singh Mehta

to Bageshwar. More than 400 people attended the meeting, and took an oath not to give *utar* and to hold a larger meeting at Bageshwar to take the movement to the masses of Kumaun.⁶⁹ *Shakti* also gave a call to its readers to come to the Bageshwar meeting and abolish *begar*.⁷⁰ The consciousness against *begar* was at its peak around this time, particularly in villages of Katyur and neighbouring *pattis*. Indeed, in the first week of January senior officials of the Forest Department were not served with coolies in Dwarahat and Ganai. Despite these signs, the civil authorities did not anticipate any serious trouble, and the Deputy Commissioner, W.C. Dible, proceeded with what he could only believe was a routine visit to the annual fair at Bageshwar.⁷¹

Meanwhile, nearly fifty activists, led by Hargovind Pant, Badri Dutt Pande and Chiranjilal reached Bageshwar from Almora on 10 January.⁷² In the festival town, Shivdutt Pandey, Ram Dutt, Mohan Singh Mehta, and dozens of village activists had made preparations for the meeting. For the first time, the nationalist slogans of Bharat mata ki jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai and Vande Mataram were heard in the Katyur valley and in Bageshwar town. Some demonstrators wore the cotton Congress caps brought from Nagpur. The banner with the caption *coolie utar band karo* (abolish coolie *utar*) was carried by a procession on 12 January. According to eyewitness accounts, the number of women, children and old men desiring to catch a glimpse of the movement from their rooftops was at least as many as the people actually demonstrating on the roads. The procession itself ultimately turned into a huge meeting on the banks of the river Saryu, attended by more than ten thousand people.⁷³ The meeting took an oath not to give *utar*.⁷⁴ (On the same day, a large meeting was held at Silot Mahadev in British Garhwal, under the leadership of Ishwari Dutt Dhyani, where those present took the same oath as at Bageshwar).⁷⁵ The next day too, a large meeting was held on the river bank. Here criticisms of the colonial administration were presented, along with a review of the socio-political situation with specific reference to Kumaun. The oath not to give *utar* was repeated, and more spectacularly, village headmen threw their coolie registers into the Saryu.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *Shakti*, 25 January 1921; PD file 1151/1921, p. 9.

⁷⁰ *Shakti*, issues of 4 and 11 January 1921.

⁷¹ PD file 1151/1921, p. 7

⁷² Situated at the confluence of the Saryu and Gomati, Bageshwar town was famous for its annual Uttarayani fair. After the events of 1921 it became a venue for political and nationalist activities and on 22 June 1929, Gandhi himself came to lay the foundation stone of a Swarajya Temple.

⁷³ PD file 1151/1921, pp. 9–11, 33, 93; *Shakti*, 18 January 1921.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁵ Interviews with Mangat Ram Khantwal, Mukund Lal and Raghuwar Dayal.

⁷⁶ PD file 1151/1921, p. 27; *Shakti*, 18 January 1921.

The Deputy Commissioner, Dible, came to know on 14 January that these meetings had had a great impact on the people. Village headmen and other influential people had lost control over the area around Bageshwar, and could only refuse to carry out the orders to make coolies available for officials.⁷⁷ Dible threatened the protesters and asked them to leave Bageshwar, but to no avail. In fact, the leaders, influenced by the militancy of the peasants, delivered more provocative and anti-government speeches. On this day too some coolie registers were floated in the Saryu, while the assemblage took the oath not to give *begar* by taking the water of the river in their hands.⁷⁸

The meetings and processions continued on 15 January. Dible could not take recourse to any repressive measures owing to the limited means at his disposal—21 officials, 25 soldiers, and 500 bullets.⁷⁹ To his dismay, the Deputy Commissioner found that even hitherto loyal *thokdars* and *malguzars* were under the influence of the abolitionists. Even his assurances to reform the *utar* system and the forest administration failed to have any impact. The people sitting outside the Dak Bungalow where he was staying became so militant that Dible could not issue an intended warning to the erstwhile loyalists.⁸⁰

The next day, when Dible wanted to return to Almora, the coolies were not available. The following day, two *malguzars* were able to arrange some coolies. Otherwise, only those officials who had hired permanent coolies could return home from Bageshwar, although some were able to avail of hired ponies and coolies.⁸¹ Tehsildars reported from different parts of the district that the *malguzars* and *thokdars* who were themselves pro-government were rapidly losing their influence in the villages.⁸²

After the success at Bageshwar, it was imperative for the abolitionists to carry forward the decisions taken there to all parts of Kumaun. Movement leaders went from village to village explaining what had happened at Bageshwar and outlining the future course of action. Thus, Hargovind Pant went to Ranikhet via Someshwar, Badri Dutt Pande to Almora via Takula and Mohan Singh Mehta to his own region of Katyur. Mass contact work was conducted in an organised and highly effective manner, and a movement, earlier confined to Bageshwar and its surrounding *pattis*, soon spread all over Kumaun. After 18 January 1921, a continuous series of well-attended meetings were held in more than a hundred villages of

⁷⁷ PD file 1151/1921, p. 11

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13, *Shakti*, 18 January 1921, interviews with Mohan Singh Mehta and Hari Krishan Pandey.

⁷⁹ PD file 1151/1921, p. 13; Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kesari*, p. 38

⁸⁰ PD file 1151/1921, p. 15.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 91.

Kumaun and Garhwal. Among other places, such meetings were held at Almora, Chamethakhal, Dangoli, Pithoragarh, Lohaghat, Ramnagar, Kapkote, Kandia Mahadev, Jamkeshwar, Salam and Dewal.⁸³

Coming now to the official response, prior to the Bageshwar incident itself, Commissioner Wyndham had written to the provincial government on the basis of Dible's report, about the likelihood of a movement against *utar*.⁸⁴ But the movement was taken seriously only after the shows of defiance at Bageshwar. The manner in which both peasants and leaders refused to carry out the orders of the Deputy Commissioner was the first incident of its kind in the history of British ruled Kumaun. Although Dible wanted to arrest the movements' leaders on 17 January, he desisted when faced with the extraordinary resentment of the peasantry.⁸⁵ Unnerved, Dible wrote off to the Superintendent of Police to be alert. Dible was also greatly alarmed by the participation of school teachers in the movement.⁸⁶ In order to disrupt the movement, it was suggested that loyalists be appointed *malguzars* and that family members of loyalists be given prestigious posts and titles.⁸⁷ The hostility faced by Dible was confirmed by his Deputy Collector, Ijaz Ali, who was neither given coolies, nor water, nor even greeted with the customary *salaam* in Katyur.⁸⁸ Writing to Wyndham on 22 January about the gravity of the situation, Dible complained that he did not have an adequate police force.⁸⁹ The possibilities of sections under the Criminal Procedure Code, other than 144, being applied to quell the abolitionists were also being considered.⁹⁰ The intelligence department was given the responsibility to keep an eye on Swami Satyadev and other Congress leaders who had come up from the plains.⁹¹

The police superintendent reached Almora with an armed contingent on 24 January. He found the situation alarming due to the non-cooperation of the *patwaris* and *malguzars*.⁹² However, the police were called back from their mission to deal with dacoities in the plains.⁹³ Meanwhile, orders were issued to block the march of Swami Satyadev beyond Haldwani.⁹⁴ Interestingly, Dible appeared more frightened of the movement than his superiors.⁹⁵ When students wore Gandhi caps and there were possibilities

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 17, *Shakti*, 18 January 1921.

⁸⁴ See letter by Wyndham to Chief Secretary, dated 10 January 1921, in PD file 1151/1921

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 91, 93.

⁸⁷ *Shakti*, 25 January 1921; *Independent*, 24 February 1921.

⁸⁸ *Shakti*, 8 February 1921.

⁸⁹ PD file 1151/1921, pp. 53, 55, 57.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 85.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 161, 163

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 87.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49

of a strike in the Ramsay School at Almora, Dible felt that the situation was out of his control. But the provincial government was more worried about the peasant movement then raging in Awadh.⁹⁶ Even Wyndham told Dible that Kumaun was a small hot part of a vast country. He suggested that *utar* be deployed only in outlying regions.⁹⁷ Attempts were also made to restrict the tours of district officials and to make the system of paid coolies compulsory.⁹⁸

However, in the following weeks and months the district administration did resort to repressive measures. Threats of eviction from land were made on the failure to make coolies available. The administration also used the caste card by sending a Rajput *peshkar* and a tehsildar in the Rajput dominated region for telling them not to support the movement.⁹⁹ In March 1921, Badri Dutt Pande was disallowed from attending meetings or speaking in them.¹⁰⁰ Article 144 was imposed in the towns of Almora, Pithoragarh, Ranikhet, and Nainital, while leaders were threatened with arrest and in some cases deprived of the freedom to speak at meetings.¹⁰¹ In pursuance of this policy of repression, meetings without permission were not allowed in Almora district, except in places of worship.¹⁰² In the third week of March 1921, Mohan Singh Mehta was arrested, though he was released on 21 May (this was, incidentally, the first strictly political arrest in Kumaun during the freedom struggle).¹⁰³ Radha Vallabh, a coolie zamindar, had his services terminated for instigating coolies. The gun licenses of many villagers in Ramnagar were also seized.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile in Garhwal, the movement was at its peak in April 1921. There was continuous activity in upper Garhwal under the leadership of Anusuya Prasad Bahuguna, and in lower Garhwal under the leadership of Keshar Singh Rawat. Even the Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal, Mason, could not obtain *utar* coolies. As in Almora, several *malguzars* were evicted owing to their refusal to supply coolies, and the guns of villagers seized.¹⁰⁵

Back in Kumaun, *Shakti* was asked to stand security of Rs. six thousand for the writings (53 articles) in its fourteen issues from November 1920 to April 1921.¹⁰⁶ By now, the anti-*begar* movement had largely merged with the non-cooperation movement. The protests and repression continued simultaneously. There were massive arrests in December 1921, which continued till the middle of the next year.¹⁰⁷ However, in the meantime the

⁹⁶ See Dible's letter of 4 February 1921, in *ibid.* ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 107. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107

⁹⁹ *Shakti*, 1 March 1921, *ibid.*, p. 105. ¹⁰⁰ PD file 1151/1921, p. 227

¹⁰¹ See letter by Dible to Wyndham, dated 3 March 1921, in *ibid.*

¹⁰² Chief Secretary to Commissioner, Kumaun, dated 9 February 1921, in *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Shakti*, 22 March 1921; interview with Mohan Singh Mehta. ¹⁰⁴ *Shakti*, issues of 15 March 1921.

¹⁰⁵ *Karmbhumi*, 26 January 1956; Bhaktdarshan, *Garhwal ki Divangat Vibhutyayan*, 1952, p. 446; interviews with Mangat Ram Khatwal, Mukundi Lal, Yogeshwar Prasad Bahukhandi and Raghuwar Dayal.

¹⁰⁶ *Shakti*, 21 June 1921.

¹⁰⁷ For details, see Pathak, *Uttarakhand Mein Kuli Begar Pratha*, App. III, pp. 285–305.

United Provinces government had finally decided to abolish the *begar* system, a significant victory for the peasants of Kumaun and Garhwal.¹⁰⁸

IV

In terms of its spread and mass base, the anti-*begar* movement was unprecedented in the history of Kumaun. An evolutionary sequence can be discerned in the transformation of simple individual protests into an organised movement. We had earlier discussed the two phases of the movement. In the first phase, the Congress itself was dominated by reformist and moderate trends; thus, wresting of a few concessions from the state was the aim both locally and nationally.

The first phase of the movement was much longer though less active, whereas the second phase, though it was over in less than a decade, was far more integrated, organised, mass-oriented, and intensive. In the first phase, only reforms were demanded in the *begar* system, with village protests being added to urban requests. The second phase was dominated by direct action, with the submission of memoranda being replaced by an aggressive mass movement. Moreover, during this period the movement did not remain confined to the *begar* question; the latter was closely linked to the government's forest policy, and the neglect of Kumaun with respect to education and political representation. These varied issues and demands, with *begar* very much in the forefront, crystallised into a broad-based movement encompassing different classes and social groups.

The sporadic protests against *begar* in the first half of Ramsay's tenure (1856–84) were encouraged by the local press, while questions were raised in the provincial council. Towards the end of the last century, we find the movement operating at two levels. On the one hand, individual grievances were being transformed into organised and collective protests. Such was the case with the village protests in Someshwar and Khatyari described earlier. On the other hand, early Congressmen of Kumaun, newspaper editors, lawyers, and other urban intellectuals began requesting the government to curb the excesses of the *begar* system. These gentlemen were mainly residents of Almora, Nainital, Pauri and other towns, not necessarily in close touch with the villages.

In this manner the protests against *begar* carried on in two streams till the first decade of this century. But for the most part, these streams ran parallel to each other. The urban leadership, while aware of the repression in the villages, did not want to endanger its position, and was consequently unable to go beyond the submission of memoranda to officials. Indeed, when the peasants were fined for their opposition to *begar*, these leaders

¹⁰⁸ See GAD file 739 of 1920, UPSCA.

were of little help to them. There was, at the time, neither the leadership nor the organisation to take advantage of village level opposition (as in the Khatyari incident) in spreading consciousness in other areas. Such consciousness began growing only when young men from the villages were educated and/or joined the army.

In the second phase of the movement, the urban leadership was split into two groups; one supporting the formation of coolie agencies, the other asking for the complete elimination of *begar*. Both these groups became active in their respective ways after 1913. After the birth of the Kumaun Parishad in 1916, the second section gained ascendancy, and began linking itself with the growing restlessness in the villages. Indeed, the singular success of the Kumaun Parishad was in uniting urban activists with peasants in the villages.

The movement itself saw the participation of all sections of rural and urban society: *thokdars*, former government employees, soldiers, teachers, students and, above all, all types of peasants. It was no longer confined to meetings of the Parishad or of the intelligentsia in the towns. With amazing rapidity it spread from the lowland Tarai to the upland Bhot country, and from Sore in eastern Kumaun to Chamoli in Garhwal. Participation in the movement increased continuously; and after Bageshwar especially, the number of those who supported the government position on *begar* became negligible. The latter were scared of expressing their views in public; in fact, the *malguzars* who did not throw their coolie registers into the *Saryu* at Bageshwar later destroyed them in their homes.¹⁰⁹

In 1920–21, the movement had dug such deep roots in the countryside that the administration was constrained to admit that illiterate peasants were in fact more interested than the leaders in intensifying the movements. Where leaders like Hargovind Pant were criticising only forced labour, village activists were taking assurances from the peasants that they would not serve as paid (*Khushkharid*) coolies either.¹¹⁰ A trust was also set up to support those activists against whom the administration had taken action. Now, the villagers were talking of Gandhi and Swaraj, and of fighting for the opening of the forests.¹¹¹

While the Kumaun Parishad was closely informed by the national movement, the resentment of the peasants was focused more sharply against the *begar* and forest policies. Among the well known leaders of the Parishad were Hargovind Pant, Badri Dutt Pande, Mukundi Lal, Govind Ballabh Pant, Anusuya Prasad Bahuguna, and Chiranjilal. However, a vital mediating role between these leaders and the peasants was played by dozens of local

¹⁰⁹ See Dible's letter to Wyndham, dated 4 March 1921, in PD file 1151/1921.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

activists. Among these were Keshar Singh Rawat, Laxmi Dutt Shastri, Mohan Singh Mehta, Prem Ballabh Pandey, Prem Singh Garhia, Hari Dutt Bodai, Mathura Dutt Naithani, Pratap Singh, Yogeshwar Prasad Bahukhandi, Chetram Varma, Krishnan and Upreti and Kedar Dutt Shastri. However, the anti-*begar* movement was not pyramidal in its structure. Indeed, the movement's leadership itself drew confidence from the militant mass consciousness. And on occasion, cleavages did emerge between urban and rural constituents of the movement. Thus Hargovind Pant held the opinion that if *begar* was abolished within three years, the people should be asked to serve as *khushkharid* coolies.¹¹² Again, Govind Ballabh Pant did not approve of direct action, though he changed his position after the success of the movement.¹¹³ There are thus clear indications that the urban leadership did not expect the extraordinary turn taken by the popular movement, although the district administration fully expected the peasants to be more militant than their leaders.¹¹⁴

At a time when Gandhiji had abandoned the non-cooperation movement and the khilafat initiative too had proved to be unsuccessful, the *begar* abolition movement in Kumaun reached the peak of its success. The end of an exploitative system served to deepen the confidence of the peasantry. It brought in a new wave of self-respect and self-consciousness among the people, accelerated their opposition to colonial rule and their desire for independence. Noting its hatred of officials and challenge to the authority of government, the District Magistrate of Almora had called the movement a 'revolutionary' one.¹¹⁵ Talk of 'swaraj' in the villages had become common.¹¹⁶ As one missionary wrote to Dible, as far as the public was concerned British rule was as good as finished.¹¹⁷

The strength and vitality of the movement can also be gauged by its notable successes. Apart from the abolition of *begar* by the government, the forest policy was made more liberal, with freer grazing and the collection of fuel and fodder.¹¹⁸ Coolie agencies were established, roads developed, wages were increased, and a permanent coolie gang started for the forest department.¹¹⁹ As a result of the Kumaun movement, *begar* was also abolished in Jaunsar Bawar. Its impact was also felt in the neighbouring princely state of Tehri Garhwal, where efforts were made by the state to minimise the impact of *begar*.¹²⁰

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 161

¹¹³ S P. Shah, *Govind Ballabh Pant: Ek Jiwan*, 1972, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ PD file 1151/1921, p 137. ¹¹⁵ *Shakti*, 13 September 1921.

¹¹⁶ PD file 1151/1921, p 137.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*; p. 165.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163. cf also, Guha, *The Unquiet Woods*, Chapter V.

¹¹⁹ See GAD files 739 of 1920 and 162 of 1922, UPSA; UP Council Proceedings, Vol 18, 1924, pp. 403-4; *Shakti*, 19 April 1921.

¹²⁰ GAD file 532 of 1921 and Industries Department file 92 of 1920, UPSA.

Another major fallout of the *begar* abolition movement came in the Council elections of 1923. Then, Mukundi Lal defeated Jodh Singh Negi in Garhwal, Govind Ballabh Pant won over Badridutt Joshi in Nainital while Hargovind Pant prevailed over Anand Singh in Almora. The victors were all legatees of the anti-*begar* movement, while all three defeated candidates were known to be pro-government, two of them being Rai Bahadurs.¹²¹ In the elections of 1926 again, the victors were past participants of the movement—Mukundi Lal, G.B. Pant and Badri Dutt Pande.¹²² This time too they drew upon the impact and energy of the anti-*begar* movement. In fact, the capital of the movement was utilised continually in succeeding elections in Kumaun, even after 1947.

Despite its resounding successes, one major weakness of the movement cannot be overlooked. This was the keeping away of the *shilpkar* (untouchable) community. Suppressed and exploited since time immemorial, and deeply affected by *begar*, this community stayed away from all anti-colonial movements. Indeed, at Bageshwar the first *malguzar* who arranged coolies was a *shilpkar*. Spurned by the upper castes and their representatives, the *shilpkars* looked to the British government for patronage and support.¹²³

This weakness apart, the anti-*begar* movement was unmatched for its strength and organisation, in the history of British ruled Kumaun. The majority of the abolitionists remained active throughout the freedom movement. Some of them died before independence, while others became established in politics or social work after 1947. However, in later years the contributions of peasants and village activists to the abolition of *begar* was continually underplayed. It was claimed that only God, Gandhi, Badri Dutt Pande, Hargovind Pant, Govind Ballabh Pant, Mukundi Lal and Chiranjilal were responsible for the end of the *begar* system in Kumaun. Ironically, Gandhi had himself mentioned at Almora and at Bageshwar in 1929 that the people of Kumaun had themselves abolished the oppressive *begar* system.¹²⁴ Yet, writings on the movement, especially after 1947, continued to attribute the abolition of the system to a few select leaders.¹²⁵ But as this essay has shown, it was the popular upsurge in the villages, rather than the initiative of a few leaders, that delivered the decisive blow to the system of forced labour in British Kumaun.

¹²¹ *Shakti*, issues of 18 and 25 December 1923; Shah, *Pant*, p. 74; UP Council Proceedings, Vol. 16, 1924, pp. 3, 6.

¹²² *Shakti*, issues of 11 and 18 December 1926; Shah, *Pant*, p. 85.

¹²³ PD file 1151/1921, p. 13. See Shekhar Pathak, 'Uttarakhand Mein Samajik Andolan Ki Rooprekha', Pahar-2, Nainital, 1986, pp. 97–111.

¹²⁴ *Kumaun Kumud*, 1 July 1929; *Shakti*, 13 July 1929.

¹²⁵ Joshi, *Kurmanchal Kessari*, pp. 4–5; Savitri Shyamsundar, *Political Life of Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant*, 1960, p. 70.

Excess mortality during the Bengal famine: A re-evaluation

Tim Dyson

Arup Maharatna

Dept. of Population Studies
London School of Economics

Introduction

The magnitude of mortality during the Bengal famine has been hotly debated. It is generally agreed that *official* estimates—including that of 1.5 million 'excess' deaths produced by the Famine Inquiry Commission (FIC)—are too low, partly because they make inadequate allowance for under-registration of deaths.¹ Indeed, W.R. Aykroyd, who was responsible for this estimate, later conceded that 'it was an underestimate, especially in that it took too little account of roadside deaths, but not as gross an underestimate as some critics of the Commission's report, who preferred 3 to 4 million, declared it to be'.² On the other hand, some of the *unofficial* estimates—notably K.P. Chattopadhyaya's that excess deaths in 1943 *alone* numbered 2.2 million—are often considered too high.³ The writings of Amartya Sen have been influential in determining the recent history of this debate. Indeed, Sen's own assessment that 'we may be inclined to pick a

¹ See, Famine Inquiry Commission, *Report on Bengal*, New Delhi, 1945, especially pp 108–15. On the inadequate allowance for death under-registration of the FIC, see also footnote 18 below.

² See W. R. Aykroyd, *The Conquest of Famine*, London, 1974, p. 77.

³ For criticisms of Chattopadhyaya's figures see A. K. Sen, 'Famine Mortality: A Study of the Bengal Famine of 1943', in E. Hobsbawm, ed., *Peasants in History: Essays in Honour of Daniel Thorner*, New Delhi, 1981; A. K. Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford, 1982 (especially Appendix D, 'Famine Mortality. A Case Study'), and Paul R. Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal, The Famine of 1943–44*, Oxford, 1982.

Author's note: A longer, more detailed version of this paper, with additional calculations, is obtainable from the authors' upon request.

figure around 3 million as the death toll of the Bengal Famine',⁴ has been very widely cited.⁵

In this context the present paper has two main aims. First, we review the estimates provided by Sen.⁶ While we broadly accept his *method* of analysis, we show that major problems attach to the *data* he used. A particular weakness is his separate treatment of famine mortality in West and East Bengal. This is unnecessary because detailed registration data for the whole of *undivided* Bengal were published in the late 1940s. The paper's second aim is to produce new estimates of excess mortality based on the previously neglected material for undivided Bengal. We show that directly applying Sen's method of analysis and assumptions to these data produces estimates of around 1.9 million excess deaths. And, even allowing for a much greater degree of death under-registration than that used by Sen, it is difficult to see that excess mortality could have approached 3 million.

Sen's estimates of excess mortality

Sen's assessment of excess mortality can be summarised by Table 1 which is drawn directly from his work. It gives annual registered deaths in West Bengal obtained from a 1951 Census of India publication *Vital Statistics, West Bengal, 1941-50*.⁷ The estimates of excess deaths in Table 1 derive from two assumptions as to what the 'normal' number of deaths would have been in the absence of famine. The A estimates take the average of registered deaths in 1941 and 1942 as normal; and the B estimates equate normal mortality with deaths in 1942. Due to the turmoil of partition, Sen is reluctant to conclude that excess *famine* mortality can be detected in these figures beyond 1946. Instead, he counts indicated excess deaths for 1943-46 inclusive, yielding total registered excess famine mortality of 601,000 deaths under assumption A and 673,000 under assumption B. Next Sen adopts S.P. Jain's estimate of the *average* level of death under-registration in West Bengal during 1941-50. Jain estimated that registered deaths constituted about 66

⁴ See Sen, 1981, cited in footnote 3, p. 202.

⁵ For citations of Sen's estimate of 3 million excess deaths see, for example, M. Alamgir, *Famine in South Asia*, Cambridge, Mass. 1980, p. 85, G. J. Hugo, 'The Demographic Impact of Famine: A Review' in B. Currey and G. Hugo, eds., *Famine as a Geographical Phenomenon*, Dordrecht, 1984, p. 15; D. Arnold, *Famine, Social Crisis and Historical Change*, Oxford, 1988, p. 44, and P. Kane, *Famine in China, 1959-61, Demographic and Social Implications*, London, 1988, p. 20.

⁶ We focus on Sen's work because it has been widely cited and because he is clear about his assumptions and procedures. Greenough's sometimes-cited estimate of between 3.5 and 3.8 million excess deaths is itself largely based on Sen's calculations, see Greenough, 1982, cited in footnote 3, p. 309.

⁷ See *Census of India 1951, Vol. VI Part IB, Vital Statistics West Bengal 1941-1950*, Delhi, 1955.

per cent of total deaths, giving a correction factor (CF) for under-registration of 1.51 (i.e., $1.51 = 1/0.66$).⁸ Thus Sen arrives at total excess mortality estimates for West Bengal of 908,000 and 1,016,000 deaths respectively under assumptions A and B (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Recorded Deaths in West Bengal, 1941-50,
According to the 1951 Census of India Report*

	Year	Deaths	Excess Deaths	
			A (‘Normal’ mortality = average deaths in 1941-42)	B (‘Normal’ mortality = deaths in 1942 alone)
Average	1941	384,220		
	1942	347,886		
	1941-42	366,053		
	1943	624,266	258,213	276,380
	1944	577,375	211,322	229,489
	1945	448,600	82,547	100,714
	1946	414,687	48,634	66,801
	1947	387,165	21,112	39,279
	1948	385,278	19,225	37,392
	1949	372,559	6,506	24,673
	1950	356,843	- 9,210	8,957
Total excess 1943-50			647,559	783,685
Total excess 1943-46			600,716	673,384
Total excess 1943-46 $\times 1.51$			908,000	1,016,000

Sources: See Sen, 1981 and 1982, cited in footnote 3. The original data source is Census of India 1951, cited in footnote 7.

Turning to consider East Bengal, Sen utilises an estimate of 1.714 million excess famine deaths for the period up to and including 1944 contained in a 1951 Census of Pakistan report.⁹ If this figure is added to the two estimates for West Bengal then total excess mortality estimates for undivided Bengal of 2.62 and 2.73 million are obtained. Alternatively, Sen makes use of the related facts that (a) the population of West Bengal was almost exactly one-third of the population of undivided Bengal and (b) that before 1943, registered deaths in West Bengal were almost exactly one-third of total registered deaths in undivided Bengal. Thus estimates of total excess mortality in undivided Bengal can be obtained by multiplying the A and B estimates for West Bengal by 3, giving figures of 2.72 and 3.05 million

⁸ See S. P. Jain, ‘Computed Birth and Death Rates in India during 1941-50’, Annexure III of Appendix II of *Census of India, 1951, Volume I, India, Part I-B-Appendices to the Census Report, 1951*, New Delhi, 1955.

⁹ See *Census of Pakistan, 1951. Volume 3, East Bengal, Report and Tables*, Karachi, p. 30

estimates for West Bengal by 3, giving figures of 2.72 and 3.05 million excess deaths respectively. These estimates can be summarised as follows:

	<i>Total excess mortality (millions)</i>
<i>Estimate A for West Bengal + Pakistan</i>	
Census figure for East Bengal	2.62
<i>Estimate B for West Bengal + Pakistan</i>	
Census figure for East Bengal	2.73
Estimate A for West Bengal $\times 3$	2.72
Estimate B for West Bengal $\times 3$	3.05

Sen stresses that several *downward* biases are built into these figures. First, he contends that use of a correction factor for death under-registration which relates to *average* conditions during 1941–50 fails to reflect the fact that death registration was probably *especially* bad in 1943. Second, fixing ‘normal’ mortality with reference to pre-famine years (1941 and 1942, what Sen calls a ‘stationary death norm’) neglects the fact that death rates were generally falling in the 1930s; therefore, the relevant comparison to calculate excess mortality should *not* be with pre-famine mortality, but with the presumably *lower* level of mortality which would have occurred in the absence of famine. Third, Sen notes that the East Bengal estimate of 1.714 million pertains only to deaths occurring up to the end of 1944; yet the West Bengal data suggest a continuation of excess famine mortality until 1946 at least. Because of these various biases Sen is inclined to settle on the suitably round number of 3 million excess deaths.

Sen’s estimates reconsidered

Our chief criticism of Sen’s estimates relates to the data he used. He was unaware of published material for *undivided* Bengal for the period *after* June 1944.¹⁰ Table 2 gives annual registered deaths in undivided Bengal for

¹⁰ These data are contained in *Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for 1943 and 1944*, New Delhi, 1946; *Statistical Appendices to Annual Reports of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for the Period 1940–44*, New Delhi, 1947; and *Statistical Appendices to Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for the Year 1945*, New Delhi, 1948. The provisional numbers of registered births and deaths in undivided Bengal in 1946 are found in *Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for 1946*, New Delhi, 1948, pp. 4–5. So far as we can ascertain, these detailed registration data for undivided Bengal have nowhere been used in all that has been written about the famine. However, there is mention of the *annual* registered crude death rates for 1944 and 1945 in *Census of India 1951, Volume VI, West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore, Part IA-Report*, Delhi, 1953, p. 331; and Greenough cited in footnote 3 (footnote 7 on p. 301).

1941-46 and subjects them to the same procedures and assumptions which Sen applied for West Bengal. The resulting estimates of excess mortality are 1.8 and 1.9 million deaths. Two reasons emerge as to why Sen's estimates of excess mortality for West Bengal in Table 1 are probably too high. First, the material for undivided Bengal do *not* support the idea that elevated mortality lasted for years after the famine. To quote from the all-India Public Health Report for 1945: 'The deterioration in health conditions [in Bengal] that started with the famine in 1943 gradually disappeared by the middle of the year 1945'.¹¹ Second, the data for undivided Bengal show a slight *increase* in deaths from 1941 to 1942, which viewed in historical context is perhaps not surprising. In contrast, the West Bengal data in Table 1 indicate a sharp *decline* in registered deaths between 1941 and 1942; obviously, the low number of deaths indicated for 1942 in Table 1 influences in an upwards direction both the A and B series of excess deaths.

Table 2

Registered Deaths in Undivided Bengal, 1941-46: A Re-estimation of Excess Famine Deaths Using Sen's Method

Year	Deaths	Excess Deaths	
		A	B
1941	1,184,850	('Normal' mortality = average deaths in 1941-42)	('Normal' mortality = deaths in 1942 alone)
1942	1,222,164		
Average 1941-42	1,203,507		
1943	1,908,622	705,115	686,458
1944	1,726,870	523,363	504,706
1945	1,238,133	34,626	15,969
1946	1,068,996	- 134,511	- 153,168
Total excess 1943-45		1,263,104	1,207,133
Total excess 1943-45 $\times 1.51$		1,907,287	1,822,771

Sources: See footnote 10.

Notes: (i) For 1941 and preceding years, the registration area in Bengal covered 72,514 square miles. The data from 1942 onwards relate to an area of 72,435 square miles. We have not adjusted for this trivial difference.

(ii) Registered vital events for 1946 were designated 'provisional' and are thus likely to *understate* whatever were the true 'final' numbers. In this context it is noteworthy that some of the numbers of registered deaths given above are marginally higher than the numbers which appear in the *Report on Bengal*, cited in footnote 1. For example, the Report cites 1,873,749 deaths registered in 1943. This figure may well have been the 'provisional' number. If so, then the suggestion is that provisional numbers were not severe understatements of final numbers i.e., $1,873,749/1,908,622 = 0.9817$.

¹¹ See *Statistical Appendices to Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for the Year 1945*, New Delhi, 1948, p. 39

As noted by Sen, in the pre-famine period almost exactly one-third of registered deaths in Bengal were registered in West Bengal. Table 3 compares registered deaths in West Bengal obtained from the 1951 Census of India publication as used by Sen, and the numbers of registered deaths in undivided Bengal. It shows very considerable—and rather puzzling—variations in the fraction of deaths indicated to be occurring in West Bengal. In 1942 it is only 28.5 per cent, whereas by 1945 it is 36.2 per cent. Of course, real demographic fluctuations between West and East Bengal, as well as variation in registration coverage, may be influencing these comparisons. Nevertheless, the instability in the annual fraction of deaths occurring in West Bengal in Table 3 is worrying. *Ceteris paribus* it seems more likely to reflect variation in the *numerator* of the fraction (i.e., the indicated number of deaths recorded for West Bengal in the 1951 census report) than variation in the denominator (i.e., the number of registered deaths in undivided Bengal). For example, if registration coverage was especially poor in 1945 we might expect it to have influenced the statistics for both East and West Bengal. The question arises as to precisely how, in the context of partition, the publication *Vital Statistics, West Bengal, 1941–50* carved out deaths in West Bengal from the then available registration data for *undivided* Bengal. In one other important related respect it is possible to demonstrate that the data on registered deaths in West Bengal contained in the 1951 census publication are highly suspect. For the years 1941–46 inclusive the numbers of deaths by age given in *Vital Statistics, West Bengal, 1941–50* share exactly the same proportional distribution—although no warning of this stark pro-rata is provided to the

Table 3

Recorded Vital Events for West Bengal Compared with Registered Vital Events in Undivided Bengal, 1941–46

Year	Deaths			Births		
	West Bengal	Undivided Bengal	Per cent in West Bengal	West Bengal	Undivided Bengal	Per cent in West Bengal
1941	384,220	1,184,850	32.4	541,280	1,594,291	34.0
1942	347,886	1,222,164	28.5	506,578	1,448,299	35.0
1943	624,266	1,908,622	32.7	440,014	1,151,556	38.2
1944	577,375	1,726,870	33.4	377,376	957,210	39.4
1945	448,600	1,238,133	36.2	457,356	1,301,314	35.1
1946	414,687	1,068,996	38.8	524,365	1,478,857	35.5

Sources: For West Bengal see footnote 7; for Undivided Bengal see footnote 10

Notes: (i) See the notes to Table 2.

(ii) In passing, we note that the variation in the fraction of births indicated to be occurring in West Bengal is also rather perplexing.

unsuspecting reader.¹² Therefore there seems little reason to attach much confidence to the annual numbers of registered deaths in West Bengal as a guide to the time path of famine mortality.

The data on registered deaths in undivided Bengal in Table 3 also throw light on the figure of 1.714 million excess deaths for East Bengal given in the 1951 Census of Pakistan Report. It is worth quoting the section of this report which addresses the demographic effects of the famine:

The Birth and Death Registration system, which is normally operated by the village chowkidars who are often illiterate and irresponsible, is notoriously unsatisfactory, but during the famine year, even this defective machinery practically collapsed as the chowkidars themselves became victims of the famine. People left their homes, families and children died here and there. Women and children whose feeble legs could not carry them far, perished unnoticed in the recesses of the villages. The famine death roll as worked out from the official statements, which as explained are largely estimates in the absence of reliable reports, for East Bengal comes to about 17,14,000. The signs of famine became visible about July 1942, and its worst effects in the form of epidemics continued until December, 1944. The total number of deaths in these years has been estimated at 33,35,000 which, reduced by the quinquennial normal average of about 5,40,000 deaths annually, gives the foregoing official figure of deaths from the famine. According to popular belief, however, the deaths from famine in East Bengal were between two and two and a half millions...¹³

It seems clear from this quotation that the basic equation being evaluated is :

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} \text{Excess deaths,} & & \text{Total deaths,} & & \text{('normal' average annual} \\ 1942-44 & = & 1942-44 & - & \text{deaths} \times 3) \\ (1,714,000) & & (3,335,000) & & (540,000 \times 3) \end{array}$$

The normal average deaths are multiplied by three because a three year period is involved.¹⁴ Also, it is virtually certain that the data source from which the actual numbers of deaths given above were obtained was the system of vital registration.¹⁵ This conclusion seems confirmed by the fact that the

¹² This misled Sen into concluding that there was no change in the proportional distribution of deaths in the famine years, see Sen, 1981, cited in footnote 3, pp. 211-13

¹³ See *Census of Pakistan, 1951*, cited in footnote 9, p. 30.

¹⁴ Note the misprint; the correct evaluation of the equation gives 1,715,000.

¹⁵ For example, note the immediately preceding discussion of the registration system and the reference to the 'quinquennial... average'. Quinquennial averages of *registered* deaths are widely used to give 'normal' numbers of deaths in the *Report on Bengal* cited in footnote 1.

total number of deaths given for East Bengal for 1942–44 inclusive (3,335,000) is close to the number (3,238,000) obtained by taking *two-thirds* of registered deaths in *undivided* Bengal for these years (i.e., $3,238,437 = 2/3 (1,222,164 + 1,908,622 + 1,726,870)$). -

However, at this juncture a serious problem arises with the statistics on deaths provided in the *Pakistan Census Report*; for there is surely no valid basis for setting the normal average annual number of deaths in East Bengal at only 540,000. Consider, for example, that during 1938–42 the average annual number of deaths registered in undivided Bengal was 1,184,903.¹⁶ Since about 2/3 of these were registered in East Bengal the normal annual number of deaths on this basis alone should be 790,000. The origins of the figure of 540,000 may never be known. But it is a *gross* underestimate, which introduces a massive *upward* bias into the above calculation of 1.714 million excess deaths.¹⁷

So the detailed statistics on registered deaths in undivided Bengal discredit both the registration data given in *Vital Statistics, West Bengal, 1941–50* and the figures published in the 1951 *Pakistan Census Report*. We have also seen that the data for undivided Bengal produce estimates of 1.8 and 1.9 million excess deaths when subjected to Sen's procedures (see Table 2). However, these estimates may still need to be amended to take account of two sources of bias mentioned by Sen — namely, changes in death registration coverage (especially in 1943) and the use of a 'stationary death norm'.

Re-estimation of excess deaths

The most difficult issue in estimating excess mortality is the determination of the appropriate correction factor for under-registration of deaths. This matter has sometimes been complicated because analysts have made errors in interpreting statistics on death registration completeness.¹⁸

¹⁶ See the *Report on Bengal*, cited in footnote 1, p. 108. See also Table 5

¹⁷ For example, incorporating 790,000 into the equation leads to 965,000 excess deaths for 1942–44 in East Bengal.

¹⁸ For example, S. Sengupta estimated that death registration was 31 per cent deficient and then proceeded to use a correction factor (CF) for death under-registration of 1.31, whereas in fact the associated CF should be $1/(1-0.31) = 1.45$; see *Census of India* 1951, cited in footnote 10, pp. 329–31. It is worth recounting the adjustment made by the Famine Inquiry Commission for death under-registration in 1943. The commission stated that '[a]ccording to figures published by the Bengal Public Health Department, 1,873,749 people died in Bengal in 1943. The average number of deaths reported annually during the previous 5 years, 1938 to 1942, was 1,184,903, so that deaths in 1943 were 688,846 in excess of the quinquennial average'. After considering the weaknesses of the registration system the commission concluded that '...we are of the opinion that the number of deaths in excess of the average in 1943 was of the order of one million...', see *Famine Inquiry Commission* cited in footnote 1, pp. 108–109. From this it is clear that the commission is saying that registered *excess* mortality (688,846) has

Table 4 summarises results from studies which have assessed registration coverage in Bengal. Such estimates can only be regarded as approximate. However, we can probably safely conclude that the level of death registration was higher than that of births. There is also a suggestion from Table 4 that registration completeness may have deteriorated at some time after around 1940-42. Finally, it is noteworthy that S. P. Jain's estimates imply the largest correction factor for under-registration of deaths.

Turning to the famine period itself, there is general agreement that registration coverage deteriorated in 1943 and improved in 1944. The Famine Inquiry Commission remarked that:

In spite of the conditions produced by the famine, there was no universal breakdown in 1943 in the system of recording deaths. We made careful inquiries on this point from local officials and other witnesses.

It also stated that :

At the end of 1943 a considerable effort was made, by civil and military medical authorities, to improve the registration of deaths. Emergency medical workers were instructed to supervise the recording of deaths by *chowkidars* and to check and accelerate the whole system. The result was an unquestionable improvement in the collection of mortality statistics and the figures for the first half of 1944, can probably be regarded as reasonably accurate.¹⁹

While we doubt that registered deaths during the first six months of 1944 were 'reasonably accurate', there seems to be no good basis for the sweeping view that the registration system 'practically collapsed'. The basic integrity of the registration data for the main famine period is also attested, for example, by the similarity of the monthly pattern of deaths in undivided Bengal during the famine to the average monthly distribution of deaths holding during the preceding quinquennium.²⁰ Given the potential offsetting effects of the deterioration in 1943 and improvement in 1944, it is at least questionable whether the *average* level of death registration during 1943 and 1944 was very much worse than in the immediately adjoining

to be subjected to a CF of 1.45 (i.e., $1,000,000/688,846 = 1.45$) in order to give a better idea of the true number of excess deaths in 1943, which they believed to be around one million. However it follows that the commission believed that *total* deaths in 1943 were 2,184,903 (i.e., 1,184,903 *plus* one million); therefore the commission was of the view that the level of death registration in 1943 was 86 per cent (i.e., $0.86 = 1,873,749/2,184,903$) with an associated CF of $1.16 = 1/0.86$.

¹⁹ For these quotations see Famine Inquiry Commission, cited in footnote 1, p. 109.

²⁰ See the graph given in Famine Inquiry Commission, cited in footnote 1, p. 113.

Table 4

Estimates of Vital Registration Completeness for Bengal

Analyst (s)	Period	Territory Covered	Method(s) of Assessment	Births		Deaths	
				Level of Registration	Correction Factor	Level of Registration	Correction Factor
1. A.E. Porter	1921-30	Undivided Bengal	Differencing method	65.5	1.53	70.0	1.43
2. S.R. Chowdhury	1931-40 (births) 1930-32 (deaths)	Undivided Bengal	Reverse Survival (births) and growth balance (deaths)	61.7	1.62	76.0	1.32
3. Present authors	1940-42	Undivided Bengal	Growth balance	n.a.	n.a.	74.7	1.34
4. S. Sengupta	1941-50	W. Bengal	Reverse survival	50.4	1.98	69.0	1.45
5. S.P. Jain	1941-50	W. Bengal	Differencing method and reverse survival	57.9	1.73	66.1	1.51
6. P.G. Chowdhury	1948	Six districts of W. Bengal	Comparison of district vital returns with survey figures	62.3	1.61	68.3	1.46

Sources: (1) *Census of India 1931, Vol. 5, Bengal and Sikkim, Part I, Report*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 127.

(2) S.R. Chowdhury 'The Unprecedented Growth of Population in Bengal in the 1930s: An Effort to Find Out the Real Mechanism', M.Sc. Demography Thesis, London School of Economics, September, 1989.

(3) Details obtainable from the authors upon request.

(4) *Census of India 1951*, cited in footnote 10, pp. 329-331.

(5) See Jain cited in footnote 8.

(6) *Census of India, 1951*, cited in footnote 7, Appendix B.

Notes: (i) The correction factor (CF) is the reciprocal of the estimate of the proportion of events registered. See also footnote 18.

(ii) The level of registration completeness figures given for the study by P.G. Chowdhury were obtained by comparing the number of events (i.e. births and deaths) recorded in the district vital returns with the number of events recorded by a special survey.

years of 1940–42 and 1945. There is evidence that death registration did not invariably deteriorate during other Indian famines.²¹

Undoubtedly, the difficulties faced by any demographic analysis for Bengal for 1941–50 are considerable. They include the limited publication of the 1941 census results, boundary changes, and major migration flows. Of all the estimates in Table 4, perhaps the strongest case can indeed be made for those by Jain. His analysis seems to have been particularly thorough. However, this does not mean that his correction factors for 1941–50 are necessarily appropriate when dealing with the famine years. Not only do they relate to West, as opposed to undivided Bengal but, more importantly, the events of partition may well have produced especially poor registration in the *latter* part of the 1941–50 decade. To quote the 1951 Census publication on vital statistics in West Bengal: 'on all showing there may have been a further fall in efficiency of registration since 1946.'²² So, partly because of the efforts that were made to improve death registration coverage in 1944, and partly because registration coverage may have deteriorated further still during the late 1940s, it is at least possible that a correction factor such as Jain's which relates to *average* conditions during the 1941–50 decade actually *overcorrects* for death under-registration during the main famine period.

These considerations, together with the obvious integrity of Jain's analysis and the fact that his CF values were derived for purposes other than estimating famine mortality, led us to follow Sen in favouring Jain's correction factors. However, given the uncertainty on this issue, it seems only sensible to provide estimates of excess mortality for a range of assumptions regarding registration coverage. Accordingly, we adopted three assumptions on the basis of the statistics in Table 4:

Assumption 1: S. R. Chowdhury's correction factors of 1.62 (births) and 1.32 (deaths) apply. Note that his CF for deaths is close to that we estimated for 1940–42 (see Table 4).

Assumption 2: S. P. Jain's correction factors of 1.73 (births) and 1.51 (deaths) apply.

Assumption 3: Correction factors of 1.90 (births) and 1.70 (deaths) apply. These figures were arbitrarily chosen to represent a degree of under-registration even greater than is implied by Jain's work.

²¹ For example, in 1939 in Hissar district the administration believed that death registration completeness improved; see Punjab Public Health Department, *Report on the Public Health Administration of the Punjab for the Year 1939*, Lahore, 1941, p. 8.

²² See *Census of India*, 1951, cited in footnote 7, p. 3.

Our basic calculations are summarised in Table 5. Panel A addresses the issue of what the death rate would have been in the absence of famine. The censuses in 1931 and 1941 provide estimates of the mid-year populations under registration in Bengal in those years. Assuming a constant rate of population growth (1.88 per cent per annum) between 1931 and 1941, we can compute the approximate mid-year population sizes for the intervening years and, by extension, 1942. Combining the registered deaths with these estimated mid-year populations gives the registered crude death rates (CDRs) for 1931–42 inclusive. We then estimate what the annual registered CDRs would have been in each of the years 1943–46 if the downward trend in the death rate of the period 1931–42 had continued. To achieve this we fitted a least-squares regression line to the registered CDRs for 1931–42. By extension, this trend line implies that the registered CDRs in 1943 and 1944 would have been 19.44 and 19.19 respectively in the absence of famine. Finally, the registered CDRs for 1931–42 and the ‘extrapolated’ CDRs for 1943–46 are all adjusted upwards by the appropriate CF’s under assumptions 1–3 to allow for under-registration of deaths (see Panel A of Table 5).

The next step is to estimate the *actual* crude death rates for the years 1943–46, again under assumptions 1–3. We first estimate mid-year population sizes for each of these years by ‘bringing forward’ the estimated mid-1942 population one year at a time. This exercise requires the numbers of registered vital events (deaths *and* births) classified by years running from July to June (i.e., mid-year to mid-year). These data are as follows:²³

<i>Period</i>	<i>Registered Vital Events in Undivided Bengal</i>	
	<i>Births</i>	<i>Deaths</i>
July 1942 to June 1943 inclusive	1,371,572	1,257,071
July 1943 to June 1944 inclusive	984,167	2,323,136
July 1944 to June 1945 inclusive	1,113,860	1,408,143
July 1945 to June 1946 inclusive	1,475,012	1,092,009

Together with the CFs implied in assumptions 1–3, these birth and death data produce the estimated mid-year population sizes shown in Panel B of Table 5. The corresponding crude death rates are then obtained by adjusting the annual numbers of registered deaths in Panel A for years 1943–46 by the appropriate correction factors and dividing by the corresponding

²³ The sources for these data are the *Annual Reports* cited in footnote 10. Registered vital events in 1946 are not available by month. To obtain registered births and deaths for the period January–June 1946 it was assumed that the monthly distribution of vital events in West Bengal in 1946 applied in undivided Bengal.

Table 5

Estimation of Excess Famine Deaths in Undivided Bengal Under Assumptions 1-3

Year	Registered Deaths	Estimated mid-year population (000's)	PANEL A				Registered Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)
			Registered CDR	Registered CDR adjusted upwards by CF =			
				1.32	1.51	1.70	
1931	1,113,312	50,046	22.25	29.37	33.60	37.83	174.0
1932	1,022,219	50,996	20.05	26.47	30.28	34.09	178.9
1933	1,197,885	51,964	23.05	30.43	34.81	39.19	200.1
1934	1,176,887	52,950	22.23	29.34	33.57	37.79	189.2
1935	1,131,427	53,955	20.97	27.68	31.66	35.65	158.5
1936	1,222,724	54,979	22.24	29.36	33.58	37.81	170.9
1937	1,232,971	56,022	22.01	29.05	33.24	37.42	176.2
1938	1,315,886	57,086	23.05	30.43	34.81	39.19	184.1
1939	1,090,530	58,169	18.75	24.75	28.31	31.88	146.6
1940	1,111,082	59,273	18.75	24.75	28.31	31.88	159.3
1941	1,184,850	60,398	19.62	25.90	29.63	33.35	155.7
1942	1,222,164	61,544	19.86	26.22	29.99	33.76	154.3
CDRs extrapolated on linear time-trend							
1943	1,908,622	—	19.44	25.66	29.35	33.05	195.4
1944	1,726,870	—	19.19	25.33	28.98	32.62	207.9
1945	1,238,133	—	18.94	25.00	28.60	32.20	143.2
1946	1,068,996	—	18.69	24.67	28.22	31.77	n.a.

PANEL B

Year	Assumption 1			Assumption 2			Assumption 3		
	Mid-Year Pop. (000's)	CDR	Excess Deaths	Mid-Year Pop (000's)	CDR	Excess Deaths	Mid-Year Pop. (000's)	CDR	Excess Deaths
1943	62,107	40.57	926,015	62,019	46.47	1,061,765	62,013	52.32	1,194,991
1944	60,634	37.59	743,373	60,213	43.31	862,852	59,934	48.98	980,520
1945	60,580	26.98	119,948	60,014	31.15	153,036	59,656	35.28	183,740
1946	61,528	22.93	—	60,917	26.50	—	60,602	29.99	—
		Total: 1.8 million			Total: 2.1 million			Total: 2.4 million	

Sources: See the *Annual Reports* cited in footnote 10; for years before 1941 data have been taken from the *Bengal Public Health Report*, Alipore, various years.

Notes: (i) The estimated mid-year populations for 1931 and 1941 (underlined) were based directly on census results pertaining to the areas under registration. In using them to derive estimates of mid-year populations for non-census years during 1931-42 (on the assumption of regular compound growth), account is explicitly being taken of probable net in-migration. However, in the absence of data, allowance cannot be made for migration after 1941.

(ii) The registered CDRs given above are lower than the official rates published annually in the *Bengal Public Health Report*. This is because the official rates were unable to adequately take account of population growth during intercensal years.

(iii) The least-squares regression line derived from the registered CDRs for 1931-42 was $CDR = 506.2098 - 0.25052 (\text{YEAR})$.

(iv) The infant mortality rates (IMRs) are infant deaths per thousand live births registered in the same year. The IMRs given for 1943-45 inclusive, are those registered in those years (i.e., they are not extrapolated). See also footnote 29.

mid-year population sizes.²⁴ Finally, 'excess deaths' are computed by first calculating the difference between the famine death rates under assumptions 1-3 in Panel B, and the corresponding extrapolated CDRs given in Panel A. These differences represent the degree to which the famine death rate was 'above trend'; if they are applied to the appropriate mid-year population sizes we obtain estimates of numbers of excess deaths. For example, in 1943 under assumption 2 there were 1,061,765 excess deaths (i.e., $1,061,765 = (46.47 - 29.35) \times 62,019$). Lastly, excess deaths are summed to provide the rounded rough estimates of total excess mortality according to assumptions 1-3 (see Panel B).

Of course, in addition to the assumptions already specified, there are other premises behind this procedure. For example, we consider it reasonable to employ the period 1931-42 to assess the appropriate normal trend in mortality; but use of a different period would alter the results. Also, is it reasonable to assume that Bengal's population grew at its average intercensal (1931-41) rate between mid-1941 and mid-1942? Particularly in the absence of data on migration we cannot be sure; again, deviation from the assumption could change the results in either direction. On the one hand, it might be objected that we cannot assume excess *famine* mortality in 1945, since the death rate in that year—though above trend—was no more so than in, say, 1938. On the other hand, it could be argued that the death rate in 1946—though below trend—was still compatible with the existence of excess famine mortality in Bengal, since the population's age structure after the famine was presumably changed in such a way as to depress the *crude* death rate.²⁵ Also, we cannot say with certainty that it is reasonable to treat the provisional number of registered deaths for 1946 as probably only a modest understatement of the true final number.²⁶ In general there are insufficient data available to evaluate these issues. However, we can say both that they are probably relatively minor (for example, in comparison with the fundamental issue of death registration completeness) and that, were we able to evaluate them, their effects on estimated excess mortality would probably be partly offsetting. With these caveats, we now discuss the results in Table 5.

The implied range of famine mortality is from 1.8 to 2.4 million excess deaths. These totals are lower than those obtained by Sen. However, they are generally higher than the simple estimates derived in Table 2 by employing Sen's own procedures. The upper estimate of 2.4 million is based upon an arbitrary assumption regarding the level of registration completeness. We know of no strong grounds for considering that the average level

²⁴ For example, the adjusted crude death rate for 1943 under assumption 1 is $40.57 = (1.32 \times 1,908,622)/62,107$.

²⁵ The famine probably reduced the proportion of the population at young and old ages. *Ceteris paribus* this would reduce post-famine crude death rates.

²⁶ See the notes to Table 2.

of death registration in 1943–44 was less than 60 per cent (as is required by assumption 3); certainly, the limited survey data available for the period are insufficient to shed much light on the issue.²⁷ In our view the rough figure of 2.1 million excess deaths arising from assumption 2 is probably as good as any.

Some additional points emerge from Table 5. The main period of population reduction was from mid-1943 to mid-1944. As can be seen from the numbers of vital events registered in Bengal listed above, the period July 1943 to June 1944 was by far the most severe in terms of both increased deaths and reduced births. However there was probably a further slight decline in population between mid-1944 and mid-1945. Thus, under assumption 2 the population of Bengal in mid-1945 was still some 2 million less than it was in mid-1943. Recovery of total numbers only commenced from mid-1945. Extrapolating from the figures in Panel B (and for a moment putting the events of partition on one side) it cannot have been until mid-1947 that the population regained its pre-famine (i.e., mid-1943) size. So while famine deaths were largely restricted to 1943 and 1944 the restoration of total numbers probably took at least four years.

Panel A of Table 5 also gives the registered infant mortality rates (IMRs) in undivided Bengal up to and including 1945. Interestingly the IMRs peak in 1944 rather than in 1943. This may reflect the relatively small number of births in 1944 rather than a greater risk of dying in that year.²⁸ Perhaps the most significant feature of the IMRs is the suggestion they provide that famine mortality was largely confined to these two years; indeed, the registered infant mortality rate for 1945 is marginally *below* the linear trend based on 1931–42. We regard this as further evidence that the great bulk of famine mortality was restricted to 1943 and 1944.²⁹

Discussion

To sum up, though not without problems of its own, the detailed vital registration material for undivided Bengal examined here casts serious doubt on the data used to generate previous estimates of famine mortality in *both*

²⁷ For example, the survey data collected by the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) Calcutta, and used by Greenough, pertain only to 1943. The number of deaths recorded by this survey for the period January to December 1943, and the number of people recorded as alive as of January 1943, may both have been influenced by their method of collection, which was the so-called 'genealogical method', see Greenough cited in footnote 3, p. 306. Whatever else were its merits, this survey does not provide a firm basis from which to evaluate registration completeness.

²⁸ For the reduction in registered births during the main famine years see Table 3.

²⁹ The least-squares regression line derived from the registered IMRs for 1931–42 is $IMR = 5871.8 - 2.9441 (YEAR)$. This gives a predicted IMR for 1945 of 145.6 infant deaths per thousand live births.

West and East Bengal. Applying Sen's procedures to these new data for undivided Bengal yields estimates of 1.8 to 1.9 million excess deaths. But taking account of the pre-famine decline in the death rate, a figure of roughly 2.1 million seems more appropriate. Most of these deaths occurred in 1943 and 1944. The evidence for a long tail of heightened mortality lasting for several years after the famine is weak. Excess famine mortality of 3 million would require that the average level of death registration in 1943 and 1944 fell to well under 50 per cent.³⁰ This is not impossible. But it would be hard to justify. Certainly, the data for undivided Bengal, coupled with Jain's estimates of under-registration, imply a figure much closer to 2 million. Thus Aykroyd's considered opinion that while 1.5 million was probably too low, equally 3 million was probably too high, seems to us to be justified.

Does it really matter if excess mortality during the Bengal famine was considerably less than 3 million? The debate as to the quantity of famine deaths arose from circumstances in which the British administration was anxious to minimise and even deny excess mortality, whereas its critics rightly were not. If a lower figure is indicated this in no way alters the fundamental issues of the causes of, and responsibilities for, what was undoubtedly a massive crisis. There was also substantial excess mortality elsewhere in India in 1943 and 1944, a fact which has received inadequate attention; some of it, in Orissa, probably reflected deaths of out-migrants from Bengal.³¹ This said, we believe that the data are fairly forthright in indicating that 3 million is a significant exaggeration of excess deaths; a figure of about 2.1 million seems more appropriate.

³⁰ For example, using the material in Panel A of Table 5, and assuming CFs of 2.2 and 2.0 respectively for births and deaths produces an estimate of excess mortality of 2.8 million.

³¹ See, *Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India for 1943 and 1944*, New Delhi, 1946, pp. 1-5. Also see *Famine Inquiry Commission*, cited in footnote 1, p. 144.

Ownership and control of land in medieval Kerala: *Janmam*–*kanam* relations during the 16th–18th centuries.

K.N. Ganesh

Kerala State Gazetteer Project

The transformation of agrarian society in Kerala during the past two centuries has generated a lot of academic and popular interest. The nature of agrarian economy that existed in the colonial period has been examined in some detail, and the patterns of agrarian change in the more recent period have been subject to much discussion. However, the growth of traditional land rights has found a place in the scholarly or popular discussions only as a brief preamble or in introductory paragraphs, and the account given is mostly based on the available references by historians or commentators of modern Kerala.¹ Accounts based on secondary evidence are sketchy, and do not reveal a deep and objective analysis of land rights as they prevailed in pre-colonial Kerala.

Studies in pre-colonial Kerala history also do not help a great deal in our understanding of traditional land rights. The only attempt at a systematic and connected account of the growth of traditional land rights has been that of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai.² However, Elamkulam's work is heavily based on the evidence from the early medieval period, i.e., from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, and does not contribute much towards a definitive understanding of the centuries immediately preceding British occupation. The conclusions of Elamkulam have also been thoroughly re-examined and revised by more recent research.³ Historians of Kerala from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries have been heavily dependent on European sources

¹ Numerous books and papers on land reforms in Kerala have been published, for example, Theodor Bergman, *Agrarian Reforms in India*, New Delhi, 1984; Ronald J. Herring, *Land to the Tiller, The Political Economy and Agrarian Reforms in South Asia*, New Delhi, 1983; T.C. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences, Land Tenures in Kerala 1850–1960*, Calcutta, 1970; P. Radhakrishnan, *Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1989. The definitions and explanations of traditional land rights are based on the discussions on the subject by British administrators.

² Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, 'Evolution of Janmi System in Kerala', in *Studies in Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970.

³ M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, 'The Traditional Land system in Kerala: The problems of change and perspective', (Mimeo) *Logan Centenary Seminar on Land Reforms in Kerala*, Kozhikode (Calicut), 1981.

for an understanding of political and economic developments in Kerala.⁴ Since the European sources, given their preoccupation with the features and possibilities of trade and commerce, did not give adequate importance to land rights, a history based on their information also fails to provide a complete perspective. Concrete work on the crucial position of traditional land rights in the developments in modern Kerala has not been forthcoming.

The object of this paper is to provide a preliminary account of the growth of land rights in Kerala in the two centuries prior to British occupation. Much research has already been done on the period up to the fifteenth century.⁵ Following the general direction of argument and conclusions of these researchers, this paper examines the changes taking place in the agrarian society of Kerala from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The paper is divided into three parts. The first deals with the structure of medieval land rights, the second on the processes of continuity and change in the land rights during the period under discussion, and the third briefly outlines the rights in land in the period immediately preceding the British occupation.

I

The traditional land system in Kerala has been called *janmi-kudiyan-sampradayam* or *janmam-kanam-maryadai*. These terms generally denote landlord-tenant relations, but an explanation of their nature depend on the interpretation of the terms *janmi*, *kudiyan* and *maryadai*.

The term *janmi* indicates a landlord in academic discussions, and in popular parlance, *janmam* means hereditary right or birthright (the term literally means birth) i.e., the right that the landlord comes to occupy by descent from his predecessor who held the land. Hence his ownership of the land does not imply any services or dues that he has to pay to an overlord for maintaining his right. In this sense his right over land is autonomous. The *janmi* loses this right only if he transfers or sells his land, and the new owner has to pay rent or dues because he does not come to own the land as a birthright. However, *janmis* could offer services to an overlord, the temple

⁴ The classic examples are T.I. Poonen, *The Survey of the rise of Dutch Power in Malabar (1603-1678)* Tiruchirappalli, 1948; Ashun Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade (1740-1800)*, Cambridge, 1967, K.M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala: 1498-1801*, Annamalai Nagar, 1960. The recent work by K.S. Mathew, *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1983 and K.K. Kusuman, *A History of Trade and Commerce in Travancore*, New Delhi, 1987 are also based on European sources

⁵ Much of the research has remained unpublished, like M.G.S. Narayanan, 'Social and Economic Conditions during the Kulasekhara Empire', unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972; Kesavan Veluthat, 'Brahmin Settlements in Kerala 1100-1500' unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1977; Rajan Gurukkal, 'Socio-Economic Role of the Temple in Kerala (AD 800-1200)' unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1978.

or the ruler as an act of homage for political or economic reasons. They could acquire lands by paying the necessary rent or dues, which would be treated differently from their *janmam*.

The growth of the *janmam* right has been traced to the formation of a stratified agrarian society between the ninth and twelfth centuries, i.e., during the later Cera period.⁶ Agrarian settlements grew up in the river valleys and the brahmans came to establish hereditary rights over the wet lands. Rulers and *naduvالي* chiefs made land grants and other allotments as permanent rights to temples that were being established. The growth of the temples and brahmans as large landowners was manifest during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Lands held by these landowners were cultivated by large and small tenants. By the twelfth century, gradation of rights over lands had emerged, with the *naduvالي* chief at the top, followed by *uralar* (land owners and temple trustees), *karalar* (tenants and intermediary landholders), *kudiyar* (settled tenant cultivators), and the *adiyar* (bonded service classes) on the lowest rung. Legal codes (*kaccams*) were evolved that helped sustain the authority of the landowners over the tenants and the servile class.⁷

The ownership right of the temples, brahmans and the *naduvالي* chiefs were not specifically characterised as birthrights during this period, when hereditary land rights were in the process of formation. During succeeding centuries, Nambudiri brahmans and chiefs owned lands as *janmam*, as the rights that they held were devolved from their predecessors by matrilineal or patrilineal forms of succession. Temples as corporate institutions controlled by administrative bodies, where the members held their position as a hereditary right, also came to be classified in the same way.

Growth of the *janmam* right also resulted in the growth of new supportive institutions. *Kaccams* which were codified regulations instituted by temple managements and which ensured the sustenance of the authority of the emerging landowning class, declined after the twelfth century.⁸ From the fourteenth or fifteenth century, land rights were being related to traditionally accepted norms of the region or village (*kiliyakkam*).⁹ Rights of the

⁶ Kunjan Pillai, 'Evolution of the Janmi System' *op. cit.* p. 348. He argues that the term *janmam* originally meant lifetime and applied to the position of the temple *uralar* during the eleventh century. When the position became hereditary, the right also became hereditary.

⁷ For a discussion see M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op. cit.* The doctoral dissertation of M.G.S. Narayanan, 'Social and Economic conditions during the Kulasekhara Empire', revised and updated a number of original formulations by Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai

⁸ Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman settlements in Kerala*, Kozhikode, 1978, p. 90.

⁹ The term *kiliyakkam* appears in the Kerala records regularly from the fifteenth century. The phrase *kiliyakkam konda komuraippadu* appears in the unpublished manuscripts housed in the Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, named *Manilakam Records* (for example, Curuna (Roll), 1686 Ola (Cadjan leaf) 38, AD 1498) *Kiliyakkam* appears in Malabar in the *Vanjeri Granthavari*, ed., M.G.S. Narayanan, Calicut University Historical Series No. 1 Kozhikode, 1987, Nos. 1A (AD 1541), 2A (AD 1541), 3A (AD 1541), 17A (AD 1567), 23A (AD 1572).



landowner, along with the numerous privileges that he held including military and legal functions, became part of the accepted practice. Dues to the king were also similarly consolidated as *komuraippadu* (customary obligations from the land) which took the place of formal land revenue.¹⁰

Gradation of rights among the producing classes was also consolidated. The different strata of producers which had been formed during the later Cera period were transformed to form a class of leaseholders (*pattakkar*) who held lands from the *janmi* on the basis of payment of a share of the produce as *pattam* or *varam*. By the eighteenth century, *pattam* became a category that applied to all types of leases by landholders occupying different economic positions.¹¹ Variations of the form of rent depended on the established traditional and legal practices in the particular regions.¹² With the growth of *janmam* tenure along with the privileges associated with it, the settled cultivators in various regions became tenants paying rent or service to the *janmi*. *Kudiyar* became a generic term applied to different types of leaseholders.¹³ *Adiyar* (or *al*) still remained bonded slaves, attached to the

¹⁰ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, (9 Vols., Thiruvananthapuram 1910-1939) Vol. III, 1923, No. 59 (AD 1522), Vol. VI, No. 117 (AD 1517), *Matilakam Records*, c. 1686-38 (AD 1498), c. 1721 0.176 undated.

¹¹ This is shown by the different forms in which leases or *pattam* appear. This included *pattam* or simple lease for one year, *ulavupattam* which implied cultivating rights, often received by payment of a certain amount in cash or kind as surety, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, *Show Case Records*, Lease Deed of AD 1621, permanent lease or *Marayapattam* (*Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. IV, Thiruvananthapuram, 1916, pp 93-6) and *Varam-padangal pattam* which also had a permanent nature (*Matilakam Records*, c. 1595 Ola 213 AD 1754) Records of eighteenth century show still other forms like *Kuttagaipattam* (*Matilakam Records*, c. 1056 0.207 AD 1740) Details of these documents also showed that whereas the simple leaseholder occupied a low economic position, the holders of *marayapattam* and *Varam-padangal pattam* were wealthy landholders of the area.

¹² This is shown by the comparison between the dues paid from two adjacent regions in Southern Kerala, Kuttamangalam-Punnathala and Navaykulam, both in the Northern Part of Thiruvananthapuram District (*Matilakam Records*, c. 1686 0.38, AD 1498 for the former, and *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, pp 215-16, Thiruvananthapuram Museum Copper Plate, AD 1522 for the latter). The dues in the former case included *ottidaikadamai*, *onachelavu*, *karkata-kachelavu*, *kalathenga*, *maramorakalchagal*, *alipilai antarayam*, *anaumurai*, *chemkompu*, *podiyadi*, *pulayirai* from Channar & Meni Irai. The latter included *sengoma*, *talaivilai*, *mupparamunnali*, *anchumulam*, *ettukuttu*, *angam*, *taragu*, and *cungam*. In both cases, the dues were collected by the ruler. The variations were much greater if northern and southern Tiruvitamkur are compared. Compare the above documents with the inscription from Parakkai, Kanyakumari District of AD 1465 (*Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. VI, Thiruvananthapuram, 1927, pp. 110-11).

¹³ The term *kudi* originally appear to have denoted a settler who laboured in the land of the landlord (See reference to *kudis* of Ilavar in Tarisappalli Copper-Plates of AD 849, M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972, Appendix-IV. However, by the sixteenth century, *kudigal* or tenants are distinguished from *aladiyar* (bonded labourers). *Kudigal* and *kudimakkal* referred to in *Matilakam Records*, c. 1715 Ola 19 AD 1565, c. 2601 0.16 undated c. 17190 31 AD 1551, c. 16560 226 AD 1542 etc.). The identification of *kudiyar* as tenants is clear in the land survey and settlement in Tiruvitamkur, where *kudiyar* were set apart for providing rent to various temples, *Matilakam Records*, Therattu dated AD 1746.

soil in food crop producing areas.¹⁴ Different communities involved in garden land cultivation and other occupations also came to be termed *adiyar*.¹⁵

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the basic organisation of land rights was as follows. The temples and brahmans, along with *Naduvqli* chiefs who were consolidating their position in different parts of Kerala, held most of the available land, wet lands as well as garden lands, as a permanent, hereditary right.¹⁶ Such lands were classified as *devaswam*, *brahmaswam* and *cerikkal* lands respectively. They were being cultivated by settled cultivators who paid a share of the produce to the *janmi*. These cultivators were not a monolithic class, they included large landholders who got lands cultivated by others on lease and simple leaseholders.¹⁷ The rights of the *janmi* over the land was expressed by *kiliyakkam* and the obligations of the tenants were determined by custom (*maryadai*).¹⁸ Unlike *kaccams* of the early medieval period, *maryadai* had no standardised form applicable throughout Kerala.¹⁹ The use of the term *maryadai* shows that its application was localised. The actual form of the privileges and rights exercised by the

¹⁴ *Al* or *adiyar* are referred to from all over Kerala, for example: *Matlakam Records*, c. 1722 0.17 AD 1488, c. 2601 0.29 AD 1587, c. 2600 0.84, AD 1588, c. 1719 0.19, AD 1565, c. 1408 0 48 AD 1721

¹⁵ *Matlakam Records*, c. 1719 0 5 (AD 1565) refers to the Channar caste in South Tiruvitamkur as *Adiyar* c. 1722 0.17 (AD 1488) refers to 'Perumal Adiyar Nadaanmar (*Nadar*)'. Saltmakers and fishermen of the coast were also considered *Adiyar*. *Vanjeri Granthavari*, Doc 8c (undated) refers to transactions among *Adiyar* of Vettamutaya Mutta Kovil and Vettamilaya Kovil (Princes of Vettattunadu).

¹⁶ The phrase used in the *danam* or *attippper* documents, involving, land grants to temples and brahmans was *achandratarame santatipravesame* (for the descendants as long as moon and stars last) showing the permanent, hereditary nature of the grant. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, pp. 215–16 *op. cit.* dealing with a grant in sixteenth century repeats this phrase. Land grants recorded in *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. V, Part II Thiruvananthapuram, 1.26, No. 27, pp. 97–99 (AD 1697); No. 41, pp. 138–40 (AD 1603) also repeat the phrase.

¹⁷ *Matlakam Records* contain several documents mentioning the assignment of different villages held by Thiruvananthapuram Padmanabha temple as *pattam*, where the *pattam* holder was expected to collect dues from the cultivators (for example, *Matlakam Records* c. 1722 0.6 (AD 1483), c. 1720 0.128 (AD 1491), c. 2601 0 200, c. 1686, 0.26, c. 1721 0 176 (AD 1546), c. 1727 0.80 (AD 1577). Large-scale *pattam* holdings have been mentioned in other records from Central Kerala, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram *Show Case Records* No. 3 *Ulavupattam* deed of AD 1621, No. 9 Teerukuri document of AD 1728) Powerful landlords could hold lands under *Otti*, as in the case of Samutiri's (Zamorins) minister Mangat Achen (N M Nambuturi *op. cit.* Appendix 2 2 AD 1550).

¹⁸ The term *maryadai* begins to appear widely from the fifteenth century, denoting customary payments. Thus, *Kulikkamam* was paid on the products of certain *paramba* according to *Desamariyadai* (*Desamaracati*). *Vanjeri Granthavari* Doc 27A, AD 1581, No. 34A, AD. 1599, complaint lodged before Trikkandiyur Yogam on the abduction of a person from the temple *sanketam* was settled according to the *sanketamaryadai* (Doc 43A AD 1603) The term appears in other documents belonging to the period, like *Kozhikode Granthavari* and *Matlakam Records*. For an assessment on the growth of this form See M.R. Raghava Warner, 'Further Expansion of Agrarian Society: Socio-economic Structure' in *Kerala State Gazetteer* Vol. II, Part II (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Later Cera inscriptions from all parts of Kerala mention *mulikkalam kaccam* as an accepted code for temple management (M G.S. Narayanan, *op. cit.*, pp. 325–30) This

janmi and the obligations of the tenants were also becoming localised.²⁰ Disputes regarding the application of the custom, or land transactions on the basis of the *maryadai* were settled by local eminent persons called *natuvar* or *naluper*.²¹

The localisation of the conditions regarding land rights and obligations could be seen in the use of the terms *kilmaryadai*, *nattumaryadai*, *desamaryadai*, *sanketamaryadai* etc., showing the customary form as applicable to the respective local units *nadu*, *desam* or *sanketam*. Even the brahmans could exercise control over the land rights only within the limits set by local *maryadai*. The localised traditions were clearly the result of the decentralisation of politico-economic power after the decline of the later Cera kingdom, when different parts of Kerala came into the hands of different *naduvالی swarupams* or kingdoms.²² The stipulations of the localised landowning class including temples and brahmans and the territorial chiefs (*naduvالیs*) were handed down hereditarily to form localised traditional customs. Like the *kaccams*, traditional practice and custom was considered inviolable, to be followed by the temple-brahmana-*naduvالی* axis that created them and the producing classes. The politico-economic authority of the landowning class had become customary authority with *kiliyakkam* and *maryadai* being the social and legal binding force.

The customary authority that came to be established by the beginning of sixteenth century was not a static entity. Changes in the agrarian economy were taking place within the customary framework. Forest areas were apparently cleared and used for agriculture, particularly along the coast.²³ By the

universality cannot be attributed to *maryadai*, which were referred to as those of a particular regional unit. See *infra*.

²⁰ See the documents mentioned in footnote 12 *supra*. In one document, the overlord has claims over coconut and timber produce, payments for *onam* and *karkatakam* ceremonies and dues from communities like Channar. In the second case, the dues also include those from paddy fields (*mupparamunnali*), fee for maintaining a militia (*angam*) tolls from trade (*cungam* and *taragu*). These variations were clearly based on the available resources in each area.

²¹ *Vanjeri Granthavari*, Doc. 41A (AD 1602) mentions *natuvar* Doc 77A (AD 1631), 86A (AD 1642) for *nal* (*naluper*). The functions of the *natuvar* is indicated in an eighteenth century document, 'If any dispute is brought before the Mandapattumvatukkals, four panams each should be charged as *nadukkanam* for (appointing) four persons as *naduvar* and one panam be charged as *nadukkanam* for the *anaival* (policeman) appointed from the Mandapattumvathukkal and the matter should be settled on the basis of the hearing by four persons....' (*Matilakam Records*, c. 2252 0.837-8 AD 1741).

²² For a general description of the different *swarupams*, see P.K.S. Raja, *Medieval Kerala*, Annamalai University, 1953, Chapter IV.

²³ *Unnunilandesam*, a poetical work of the fourteenth century notes that the stretch of Vempolinad in Central Kerala was covered by forests (i. 126) Parts of this area had come under agriculture at least by the seventeenth century as shown by the records from Vaikom and Udayampoor Devaswom, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, *Show Case Records*, No. 118, AD 1645 Cadjan Roll 1 Ola 2 (AD 1748) Ola 3 (AD 1697). *Katul Kovilakam* of Chaliyur Tayyali, a branch of the Kochi (Cochin) family was also established through clearing forests, *Perumpadappu Swarupam Granthavari*, Kochi, 1950, Appendix 5, *Chaliyur Tayyali Rajavamsam*

seventeenth century, cultivation was extending to the Western Ghats also.²⁴ This process indicated the growth of new *swarupams* in regions away from the Nadus that were part of the later Cera Kingdom.²⁵ Expansion particularly took place on land, growing garden crops like coconut and pepper. Coconut spread in the coastal areas, where the sandy soil was extremely suited for the crop, and pepper along with other spices and fruit bearing trees were grown in *parambus* and *thottams* (gardens) on the coast as well as the interior.²⁶ *Parambus* were bordering on forests and were often converted from the forest lands.

This form of expansion indicated that new sections of the population were probably becoming agricultural producers, new chiefs were developing in interior areas, and new *janmam* rights were being established. It appears that brahmans also played a major role in this expansion, but non-brahman chiefs and land owners were also growing in importance. The geography of Kerala, with its hill slopes, terraces and valleys, dictated a localised pattern for this expansion with several independent, isolated settlements emerging and growing into self-contained units of authority which followed their own *kiliyakkam* and *maryadai*.

However, this form of localised expansion had its disadvantages. Resources at the disposal of each unit were limited and had to be protected at all costs. Fertile regions with more resources attracted the attention of rival chiefs which led to frequent quarrels. Although customary obligations played a major role, they were enforced through the exercise of political power also. This gave rise to a military class, which was maintained by the agricultural produce of the area. Another problem was the structure of the customary authority itself. Lands were held by large matrilineal joint families with a number of segments or *tayvalis*, each of whom held a share of the rights and privileges.²⁷ The process of expansion also helped these segments to expand their authority which also increased the militarisation and gave rise to a number of clashes. These clashes affected agricultural production and disrupted the payment of customary dues.²⁸

²⁴ An interesting case is the establishment of Sasta temple of Ariankavu, near Western Ghats in Kollam (Quilon) District and the extension of paddy cultivation in the area, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, *Show Case Records*, No. 228 AD 1654.

²⁵ Examples of such families are Kollemkode, Taruswarupam Palakkad (Palghat) Kadathanad, Nileswarem, Punjar and Elayedattu Swarupam (Kottarakkara), all established in various periods during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

²⁶ *Vanjeri Granthavari, passim*, refers to a large number of lands growing coconut, apart from *parambas* and *thottams*. Also see the description of coconut 'plantations' by the Dutchman Niehoff on his way to Kollam (J. Niehoff, 'Voyages and Travels into Brazil and East Indies', in *Churchill's collection of Voyages and Travels*, London, 1803).

²⁷ The distribution of privileges in medieval Tiruvitamkur is given in M. Rajarajavarma Raja, 'Some Travancore Dynastic Records' in *Kerala Society Papers*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1928-33 series I, Doc. VIII, (AD 1575), Doc. X (AD 1581), Doc. XI (AD 1587).

²⁸ Examples of such clashes in Venad are given in *Mattlakam Records*, c. 1439 0 10 (AD 1507), c. 2546 0.201 (AD 1568), c. 1719 0 37 (AD 1572).

Another feature was the growth of cash economy, which was visible from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries itself. The growth of trade with the Chinese, Arabs and then with the Europeans resulted in the inflow of cash into the economy, which went to the rulers, temples, militia and producers of garden crops.²⁹ This cash in hand was often converted into investment in land, and often cash was commuted into payment in kind and vice versa, particularly in temple transactions.³⁰ There is little evidence that the cash was consciously utilised to increase the productivity of land. However, the possibility of acquiring cash facilitated production for overseas trade, particularly in spices and garden crops. Overseas trade had already developed by the sixteenth century.

These features aided the growth of land mortgages. Mortgages called *otti* or *kanam* were already visible in the later Cera period. Evidence from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries show that their number had considerably increased.³¹ Lands were being held in mortgage from one to twelve years on payment of a certain amount in cash or kind as *artham*, on the condition that the interest on the *artham* would be deducted from the rent paid.³² The *artham* paid by the mortgage indicated previously accumulated wealth in hand, and located him a step above from the ordinary tenant cultivator who could not convert his lease into mortgage. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, lands were being mortgaged in larger numbers, generous amounts were being paid as *artham*, the duration of the mortgage and the

²⁹ For a detailed discussion on the growth of trade during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Raghava Warrier, 'Further Expansion of Agrarian Society' *op. cit.* It should be pointed out that the impact of the growing trade has to be looked at from the background of the changes taking place in land relations, a point that will be examined below.

³⁰ This form known as *ubhayam* has been found in the temple records from Tiruvitamkur and Central Kerala, for example, *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. VI, p. 102 (AD 1570). Also Vol. VII, pp. 89-91 (AD 1619), Vol. V, p. 228 (AD 1724), *Vanjeri Granthavari*, Doc. 1A (AD 1541), 15A (AD 1565), 23A (AD 1572), 25A (AD 1572), 41A (AD 1602).

³¹ *Otti* was a major tenurial form in Nancinadu region in Kanyakumari District before the fifteenth century (*Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. VI, pp. 25-26, AD 1253, Vol. III, pp. 83-84, AD 1220, Vol. III, pp. 91-92, AD 1316 etc.). Documents mentioning mortgages increase in number after the fifteenth century and they appear in other parts of Kerala, which is seen in *Vanjeri Granthavari*, *passim*, and the records published by N.M. Nambutiri. N.M. Nambutiri, *Samutiricharitrattile Kanappurangal*, Sukapuram, 1987, Appendix-I, Documents of AD 1543, AD 1553, AD 1570 Mortgage transactions are recorded in Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, *Show Case Records* No. 1 (AD 1435), No. 2 (AD 1547), No. 3 (AD 1699), the last being termed as *Pattayolakaranam* although it is a mortgage deed.

³² Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, *Show Case Records* No. 5 (AD 1621), records the mortgage of lands with the sowing capacity of 10 *para* of paddy, for three years after receiving 105 *para* of paddy as loan (*vayppa*). In *Show Case Record* No. 118 (AD 1649), 7600 *puthenpanam* is given as loan, which carried interest of 2½ per cent per year. This interest was calculated as 190 *para* of paddy and an adequate extent of land that would yield 190 *para* of paddy as *pattam* was handed over by the recipient of the loan to the donor. Numerous such cases are recorded in the documents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where the amounts paid as loans were treated as cash surety for the lands transferred.

extent of land being mortgaged increased.³³ By the eighteenth century, mortgages with thousands of fanams as *artham* paid for a duration of 30 to 48 years were not uncommon.³⁴ The number of permanent mortgages were also growing.³⁵

Direct dealings in cash were also growing. Money was pledged with land as security (*panayam*).³⁶ Long standing debts were converted into land mortgages, with the interest realised as extra cess on land (*padukalam*).³⁷ If the debt was not repaid, the land would be forfeited to the creditor. Arrears of rent were also treated as a debt bond and the lands were confiscated if the arrears were not paid along with interest.³⁸ Direct money-lending (*kadamvayppa*) with interest paid in cash or kind from land (*nerpalisa*) was also common.³⁹

The incentive to expansion of cultivation is seen in a new form of land transaction. If a land is brought under paddy cultivation, or a new tree planted, the land would be treated as *kulikkanam*. *Kulikkanam* indicated a holding, where a reduction in rent from one-third to one-fourth was given as *naduvukkur* or *kulikkur*, which would cover the expenditure for the gestation period when the trees are growing or the ground prepared for food crop cultivation. Expansion of *kulikkanam* indicated the great thrust

³³ The increase in the quantity of *artham* paid and the extent of land mortgaged is shown in several documents in *Matlakam Records*. Four pieces of lands near Thiruvananthapuram were held as *otti* for 1000 *panam* (c. 2293 0.46, AD 1674). A Potti brahman family in Thiruvananthapuram held lands for 2900 *panam* (*Ibid.*). Such big transaction extended to other parts of Kerala. One Tamil brahman paid 12700 *puthuppanam* to Kavalappara Mooppil Nayar for holding certain lands under mortgage (K.K.N. Kurup, ed., *Kavalappara papers*, Calicut University Historical Series No. 2, 1984), *Vanjeri Granthavari* records a mortgage for 10001 *puthuppanam* (Doc. 105A, AD 1696).

³⁴ *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. V, Thiruvananthapuram, 1916, has several documents in which lands were given as *otti* for long periods. See for example, Agasteeswaram Taluk Records, *Therattu* for AD 1746 and AD 1748 in which *otti* deeds were made for 2½ *vyalavattams* (30 years). Vilangipper document of AD 1751 refers to a previous document (executed in AD 1741) assigning a land as *otti* for 48 years. Another document in the collection of unpublished manuscripts called *Periaveettu Mudaliar Manuscripts*, pertaining to Nancinadu (abstracts of which are available in the Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram) refers to a mortgage for 72 years (Ola no. 84 AD 1618).

³⁵ An interesting case of such a mortgage is the granting of Aruvikkara temple near Thiruvananthapuram along with the land and gardens as *chora otti* to Ramayyan Dalaway, a Minister of King Marthanda Varma of Tiruvittamkur, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram. *Show Case Records*, No. 273 Doc. 19, AD 1745.

³⁶ *Panayam* appears in numerous records from Kochi. For example, see the records pertaining to the eighteenth century in a *Blue Book* containing *Important Papers relating to the Land Revenue Settlement in Cochin State*, Vol. III, Part III, Ernakulam, 1917.

³⁷ *Matlakam Records*, c. 531 0 267 (AD 1743), c. 2473 0 126 (AD 1694), *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. VI, 1927, p. 102 (AD 1570).

³⁸ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. V, 1926, pp. 215–17 (AD 1703).

³⁹ *Therattu* on Vanchiyur Adhikaram dated 921 K E (AD 1745–46), *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. V.

towards expansion of garden crops. *Kulikkanam* was found in association with mortgaged lands showing that the *kanam* or *otti* holders showed more interest in the expansion of cultivation.⁴⁰

The expansion of *kanam* and *kulikkanam* lands showed the impetus of the growing overseas trade in agricultural produce and by-products after the coming of the Europeans. Coconut, arecanut, ginger and pepper were some of the crops grown in these lands, and all of them were items of export. There are indications that local bazaars, called *angadis* and *chanthas* were growing, but they appear to have been used for bartering local produce and procurement activities of the representatives of the merchants at coastal towns.⁴¹ The inflow of cash from these developments went into acquisition of lands through mortgage and bringing new lands, particularly cash crop areas, into cultivation. An indigenous merchant class was well developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as there are references to Christian and Muslim merchants operating from interior regions.⁴² However, their major sphere of operation was apparently in the procurement of commodities for overseas trade.

The growth of *kanam* and *kulikkanam* tenures was within the customary framework. There are very few cases of land mortgages being converted to sales. Even for lands held as *kanam* for a very long duration, and for *kulikkanam* lands, customary right of the original owner was recognised.⁴³ There are instances of *janmam* lands alienated on payment of a *vilaiartham*, which again shows that the right to alienate lands was vested with the customary owner.⁴⁴ The *kanam* holder, however could sub-mortgage the land (*chittotti*) or get the lands cultivated on lease.⁴⁵ Even when production

⁴⁰ *Matlakam Records*, c. 596 0.242 (AD 1768, transformation of Land held as *otti*), c. 1698 0.52 (AD 1766, deed executed in AD 1738), c. 2522 0.21 (AD 1773), also the numerous *Matlakam Records* giving details of the land settlement of AD 1739.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* c. 1595 0 8 (AD 1746) gives details about the *chanthas* in and around Thiruvananthapuram. These included Nellaman *Chantha*, Iravipuram *Chantha* at Pattam, Vettiyurkavu *Chantha*, Thonnakkal *Chantha* apart from the major market at Chalai (Mudukkittankadai) and Karamanai *Chantha* (c. 1595 0 9). Documents give details about the merchants, articles traded, tolls and *kuttagai* (monopoly) *panam* collected from merchants.

⁴² Merchants of Chattanur in Kollam District, Mappilas of Peringottur and Manjeri in Malabar, Christian merchants around Aluva and Angamali near Periyar river are examples.

⁴³ *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. V, pp. 4-7 refers to a land under mortgage 10.175 years (from AD 1565 to AD 1739) on which the original owner still exercised certain rights. Similar cases of lands held by Ramanamatham attached to the Padmanabha temple, Thiruvananthapuram are recorded in *Matlakam Records*, c. 1458 0.2, 37 (AD 1738).

⁴⁴ *Vanjeri Granthavari*, Doc. 55A (AD 1608), 86A (AD 1642), 89A (AD 1644-45), 92A (AD 1648), 96A (AD 1649), 99A (AD 1650). In these documents, the lands were transferred as *Attupperum Nirum* on payment of *artham* fixed by four adjudicators (*Naluper, Naler*).

⁴⁵ *Matlakam Records*, c. 1544 0.93 (AD 1755); *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. V, pp. 32-34, extracts from the Vilangipper of AD 1749-50. The latter record mentions a land held under *otti* in AD 1608 sub-mortgaged in AD 1702 and again in AD 1735.

increased to meet the demands of overseas trade, the customary right of the landowner over the produce was considered inviolable.

The nature of the *kanam* tenure and its identification with the circulation of money and extension of cultivation reflects a new phase in the growth of land rights in Kerala. The land relations growing in the early medieval period provided sufficient scope for expansion, as shown by the emergence of new land holdings. However, the authority exercised by the landlords was mainly in the form of customary rights enforced through armed militia that raided the territory and the ritual authority of the temples and brahmins.⁴⁶ These groups played a major role in actually directing the expansion in the early stage. However, this expansion was limited merely to providing for the upkeep of the temples and its expenditure, the daily consumption of the rulers and brahmins and maintenance of their militia.

Growth of the *kanam* tenure clearly denoted the rise of a new intermediary landholding class who had access to wealth. They were temple servants, militia and persons in the royal service, who could dictate more favourable terms and conditions with the *janmis* than ordinary cultivators. The customary owner also found it easier to leave the lands in the hands of these persons than take the trouble of directly managing the lands. This was also due to the increased militarisation, scramble for available resources by the local chiefs, which forced the customary landlords to enlist their own protection force to manage lands. The *kaval* system in Trikkandiur temple and *manushyam* in Thiruvananthapuram temple were such institutions.⁴⁷ The temples and royal family of medieval Venad developed the institution of the *kanakku*, who acted as accountants, collectors of dues and managers.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The role played by temples and brahmins has been discussed in Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman settlements in Kerala*, Chapters VI and VII. The role of the armed militia *Akampadijanam*, *arisippadijanam* is evident from the available documents. *Matilakam Records* mention them as raiding houses, suppressing cultivators and taking away their produce and clashing with temple servants. c. 1720 0.175 (AD 1451), c. 96/9 0.1 (AD 1492), 0.2 (AD 1491), c. 2601 0.148 (AD 1492), c. 1408 0.6-7 (AD 1500). Sometimes princes were directly involved in such incidents like the robbing of Vempaykunram Village, near Thiruvananthapuram by three princes (c. 1656 0.226 AD 1542). *Arisippadijanam*, thus functioned as an internal repressive force.

⁴⁷ For a discussion on *kaval* or *cangatam*, see M.G.S Narayanan, Introduction to *Vanjeri Granthavari op. cit.* pp. xxiii. The three persons entrusted with the *Kaval* of Trikkandiur were Urakattu Panikkar, Chandrattil Panikkar and Mukkuttal Unni Ravi, who were important landholding families and servants of Samutiri and Vellattiri. In Thiruvananthapuram Temple, potti brahmins were deployed as *Manushyam* and were involved in the management and protection of temple lands. *Matilakam Records* c. 1722 0.18 (AD 1469), 0 26 (AD 1483) describe their functions.

⁴⁸ A number of references to *melkangan kanakku*, *urkanakku*, *sripandarakanakku*, *idam-udichil kanakku* and other similar posts are available in the inscriptions and records of Southern Kerala. The importance of the institution of the accountant is seen by the inclusion of the chief accountant *srikananam palliyati* in the *yogam* of Padmarabha temple. *Srikananam* Mampula Ayyappan Vikraman played a crucial role in reorganising the management of Padmanabha temple towards the end of the fifteenth century (*Matilakam Records*, c. 1686 0 39 (AD 1487), c. 1691 0.33 (AD 1487).

These accountants were drawn from the powerful landholding families of the region.⁴⁹ These developments resulted in the growth of a dichotomy of ownership and control where the customary landowner, including temples, brahmans and traditional ruling families, held the ownership rights and the new landholders came to acquire the actual controlling rights. This dichotomy was expressed in the relationship between the *janmi* and the *otti* or *kanam* holder. The controlling element in *kanam* holders are shown by the association of the tenure with *kulikkanam* which would imply direct intervention in the process of cultivation.

The rise of this dichotomy should be viewed from the geo-economic and socio-political background of medieval Kerala. The geographical features of Kerala prevented very large territorial expansion for the rulers and other customary landlords. The greater part of the land surface was still covered by forests, and the coastal region had a tendency to become water-logged and unsuitable for cultivation.⁵⁰ Hence intense conflict broke out among the various *naduvalli* chiefs for establishing their rights over the available territory.⁵¹ In this conflict the actual task of controlling lands, collecting dues, enforcing custom and ensuring the sustenance of territorial authority came into the hands of the intermediary classes including temple and royal servants and militia. Growing overseas trade from the fifteenth century encouraged the spread of garden crops as an additional source of income. This facilitated agrarian expansion.⁵² However, the process of production was mainly technologically backward and labour intensive, which meant that increase in productivity to augment wealth was virtually

⁴⁹ Members of the Panayurai and Cheruvalli families mentioned above had occupied this position (*Ibid.*, c. 1719 0.31, AD 1551, c. 2601 0.132, AD 1505). Ilampel Pandarattil, another powerful landholder suppressed by Marthanda Varma was appointed *Sripandarakanakku* of Suchindram temple in AD 1630. N. Kasinathan, ed., *Kanyakumari Kalvettukal*, Madras, 1968, No. 228.

⁵⁰ Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of Travancore & Cochin States 1819-20*, Madras, 1863, shows that the total cultivated area in Tiruvitamkur, during the early nineteenth century was 32.7 per cent of the land surface, including temporarily cultivated area. The permanent cultivable area came only to 18 per cent. This gives a rough indication of the extent of cultivation in the State.

⁵¹ For a description of the growth of these conflicts in different parts of the state, K.V. Krishna Iyer, *Zamorins of Calicut*, Calicut 1938; K.P. Padmanabha Menon *Kochirayacaritram*, Calicut, 1989; K.N. Ganesh, 'State formation in Travancore', *Studies in History*, Vol. VI, No. 1 January-June 1990, pp. 15-33.

⁵² This is shown by the numerous cases of *kulikkanam* transactions in *parambu* lands which indicated expansion in the cultivation of coconut, arecanut and pepper, *Vanjeri Granthavari* Doc. 34A (AD 1599), 21A (AD 1568), 88A (AD 1644), 27A (AD 1581), 28A (AD 1593). The *om kulikkanam*, and *pattam kulikkanam* documents compiled in *Matlakam Records* also are concerned with garden lands growing mainly coconut and arecanut, for example, the documents in c. 2301, c. 2369, c. 2470, c. 2552.

impossible.⁵³ Hence, it became important for the customary landlords to ensure that their resources are fully safeguarded from outside intervention. Moreover, the customary landlord was continuously in need of additional resources for political and military purposes, maintaining a large body of servants, etc. These requirements forced the customary landlords to mortgage their lands, which could be held by intermediaries who would serve the landlord while sustaining the production and collection of dues. The growing intermediary class whose opportunities for occupying new territories was limited chose to serve under the customary lord, while preying into his territories and actually controlling them.⁵⁴ Thus, the dichotomy of ownership and control became a mutually convenient, though tenuous arrangement between the landowners and intermediaries.

II

The growth of the new relationship and its consequences are particularly important for understanding the politico-economic processes in the later medieval Kerala. This process is best illustrated by the case of medieval Tiruvitamkur whose development from sixteenth and eighteenth centuries brings out the various features of the change in land rights.

The politico-economic order in Tiruvitamkur region had consolidated by the beginning of sixteenth century. The region that stretched from Kollam to Cape Comorin was ruled by various *swarupams*, which were related to one another by a complicated order of succession. Each *swarupam* had its separate land holdings, landlords at their service and militia. Feuds and open conflicts among the various segments were common. The major temples, with large landholdings and a corporate form of authority were Thiruvananthapuram Padmanabha temple and Suchindram Temple, and there were a number of other temples which held authority over land and *sanketam* rights. The *potti* and *nambutiri brahmana* were *janmis* in various parts, and also played crucial roles in temple management.⁵⁵ The customary land

⁵³ The information regarding technological development is scanty and scattered, mentioned in a few texts like *Krishipattu*, *Krshugeetha* and a few works on architecture. The available evidence shows that cultivation was dependent on rainfall, done with a few accessories like ordinary plough. Irrigated lands were rare, and even oxen and bullocks were not plenty. Cultivation on waterlogged areas was an arduous process involving heavy labour from the *pulaya* slaves (Ward and Conner, 'Memoir', pp. 66-68). The presence of a large number of bonded labourers probably acted as a deterrent in the development of technology.

⁵⁴ This process is illustrated in the case of Tiruvitamkur, in the crisis that developed in Tiruvitamkur towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. The nature of the crisis is shown in contemporary documents, related to padmanabha temple, *Kshetrakaryam Curuna* published as 'Matilakam Document' No. C XXIII in T.K. Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual* Vol II Appendix. Also see A.P. Ibrahim Kunju 'Umayamma Rani', *Journal of Kerala Studies* Vol II, Part I, March 1975, pp 17-24; K.N. Ganesh 'State Formation in Travancore'.

⁵⁵ Important *janmis* like Mampalli Pandarathul and Pullaman *Potti* were appointed as

ownership of these groups had become well entrenched by the sixteenth century.

Problems in the collection of rent and land management were already being experienced by the end of the fifteenth century. Quarrels broke out among the temple servants and tenants which disrupted the payment of rent and temple services for long periods.⁵⁶ Collection of rent was apparently the major issue in such quarrels. These disruptions necessitated a reorganisation of temple land management by which *tirpu* and *pattam* for organising cultivation and collection of rent over a certain part of temple lands was assigned to one person for a period of one year. Similar problems were experienced by the ruling family also. During the beginning of sixteenth century a group of accountants (*kanakku*) who were expected to supervise the collection of dues and maintain accounts were appointed. These accountants were called *arukuttathil pillaimar* who held their occupation on a hereditary basis.⁵⁷

The Tiruvitamkur chiefs had their armed militia called *arisippadi jenam*. Each segment had their *janmam* and most of the royal servants apparently rose from the *janmam*.⁵⁸ Royal servants and representatives (*pandarakaryam cheyvar*) also appear from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Brahman landlords in service of rulers are also mentioned.⁵⁹ These intermediaries began to acquire positions of *kanakku* under rulers and temples. Evidence from sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show that they were expanding their land holdings, normally under mortgage tenures for long periods.⁶⁰ The mortgage transactions also show that the intermediaries were also in possession of large sums of cash.

The various segments related to the ruling family also tried to develop a class of landowners who accepted the overlordship of the ruler and remained completely loyal to him. Their homage was normally received when a prince gained his senior position within the family. It appears that becoming a

adhikarapadartham in Tiruvananthapuram temple, *Matlakam Records*, c. 2600 0.28 (AD 1459) Members of the *yogam* of Tiruvananthapuram temple like Athiyarai, Neydasseri and Kupakkara Pottis were *janmis* by their rights.

⁵⁶ *Matlakam Records*, c. 96/2 0.1, c. 96/3 0.2, c. 2601 0 148 (AD 1491–92) give details of the quarrel and the settlement arrived at.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* c. 1722 0.4 (AD 1505), c. 2601 0.132 (AD 1505) are the first references to this body. These accountants belonged to six houses and were originally in charge of money, ornaments and precious articles coming to the treasury. Later, their functions expanded. A separate *karuvakarappura* (godown) was located at Sivagiri (near Varkallay in Tiruvananthapuram District) in the seventeenth century, under their charge (T.K. Velu Pillai, *op. cit.*)

⁵⁸ One of the families that served the ruler in later centuries, Cheruvallu Pillai is mentioned as a member of the *janam* in the documents referred to in footnote 56 above.

⁵⁹ *Vanjipuzha* and *makilanjeri*, major brahman landlord families were holding the title *madampir*, which was normally awarded in lieu of service to the ruler (*madampikur*).

⁶⁰ *Matlakam Records*, c. 2293 0.46 (AD 1674), refers to large-scale *otti* holdings by several families holding positions under the ruler.

ruler required the presence and homage of these landowners.⁶¹ The title awarded to such landowners and chiefs was called *madampikur*. It appears also that specific families were attached as *madampis* to each *swarupam*.⁶² In the present state of information it is very difficult to say whether all those who received this title were *janmis* in their own right. There were brahman chiefs, temple and royal officers (*pandarakaryam*) and presumably persons who rose from the rank of the *janam* to higher positions. The histories of a few families could be traced from the available evidence and they show that at least a few of them might have risen from relatively low positions.⁶³

Quarrels among the different *swarupams* forced each *swarupam* to preserve and expand its militia and access to resources. Such quarrels were visible throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this made the ruling family more and more dependent on intermediaries for military strength and resources. Similarly, large temples tried to preserve their land-holding from these quarrels. Infringements on temple lands by the intermediaries resulted in increased conflicts among temple and royal servants.⁶⁴ By the seventeenth century, this had become a regular feature of land transactions and caused repeated disruption of temple-related activities. This also resulted in the disruption of the sanctity and inviolability of the institution of *sanketam*, by which the autonomous, self-governing nature of temple properties was accepted as an unquestioned fact. An indicator for such disruptions is the stoppage of *pujas* and other offerings in the Padmanabha temple from time to time.⁶⁵ The chief ceremony of the Padmanabha temple, the *alpassi* festival had also to be stopped because the ruling family did not provide compensation for the disruption of the *sanketam*.⁶⁶

The disruption of temple expenditure, and quarrels among the royal servants, tenants and temple servants showed that customary authority of the landowner was coming under strain as customary obligations were often violated. Details of the various incidents that led to such violations show that the intermediary land holders who rose in politico-economic

⁶¹ *Kshetrakaryam Curuna*, deals with the political affairs of Venad during the late seventeenth century 'Matlakam Document' No CXXIII, T K. Velu Pillai, *op. cit.*, mentions this procedure.

⁶² A document in which a certain prince becomes the ruler of Kollam (Desinganad), mentions 24 persons as *madampis* and *pillamar* attached to the *swarupam* M. Rajarajavarma Raja. 'Some Travancore Dynastic Records', *Kerala Society Papers* Series 6, 1931, Doc. AD 1668

⁶³ For a discussion, see K.N. Ganesh, 'Agrarian Relations and Political Authority in Medieval Travancore, 1300-1750' (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1987), Chapter IV

⁶⁴ *Matlakam Records*, c. 1721 0.46 (AD 1542), c. 1727 0.243 (AD 1593), c. 2601 0.29 (AD 1587), c. 1727 0.216 (AD 1592).

⁶⁵ *Ibid* c. 1727 0.157 (AD 1552), such documents relating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are numerous.

⁶⁶ *Ibid* c. 2601 0.179 (AD 1606), c. 2600 0.84 (AD 1632), although this was an annual festival directly attended to by the royal family, the festival was held only on AD 1588 and AD 1633 during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

power played a major part in them. Evidence from Nancinadu, the dry cultivation area on the way to Cape Comorin indicate attempts by intermediaries to extract dues and services in violation of customary obligations. They even resorted to distraint of cultivation (*ertadai*) and confiscation of lands if their demands were not met. Such outrages resulted in frequent collective protests by the landholders of Nancinadu, including stoppage of cultivation and fleeing from lands.⁶⁷

Customary authority was almost on the point of being undermined in a series of incidents in the late seventeenth century.⁶⁸ During AD 1674 the Padmanabha temple was closed down due to lack of resources. The princess of Attingal, in an attempt to reopen the temple, ordered the realisation of arrears of rent and additional resources from the tenants, which was resisted by a group of intermediary landholders, who acted as accountants and collectors of dues, and who fled to Kalkulam in Kanyakumari district and mobilised an army.⁶⁹ The revolt was joined by a relation of the princess, the chief of Nedumangad among others. The combined forces threatened to destroy Attingal but backed down after mediation by other members of the ruling family. The incident showed that both the major pillars of customary authority—the ruler and the temple—could be seriously challenged and undermined. The intermediary landholders, growing within the customary framework, were beginning to undo the very framework itself.

Evidence from Venad towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of eighteenth centuries showed that conditions of politico-economic crisis prevailed in the region. Both the Dutch and English mention conflicts in the area.⁷⁰ The crisis conditions were manifested in the murder of Kerala Varma of Kottayam who aided the princess of Attingal in the revolt discussed above,⁷¹ Rama Varma, the ruler during the beginning of the eighteenth century, was forced to maintain a Tamil cavalry for his own safeguard, as the traditional militia no longer served.⁷² The Padmanabha temple authorities

⁶⁷ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. V, pp. 215–17, pp. 217–19, (AD 1698) pp. 219–20 (AD 1719) describe actions by Nancinadu Vellalas. These documents are in the form of *oppuravu mara moli ola*, inviolable declarations where a detailed 'grievance sheet' was prepared on those who were plundering and obstructing cultivation, including royal servants and landlords and a decision was taken by the *nattai* of Nancinadu to stop cultivation until the authorities redressed their grievances.

⁶⁸ Kshetrakaryam Curuna, T. K. Velu Pillai, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ The rebels included two major landholders in royal service Idathara Potti and Ilampel Pandarattil. Arukuttathil Pillamar who were in charge of royal accounts and the landholders of Kalkulam, showing a direct confrontation between the intermediaries and the ruling family.

⁷⁰ *Letters to Fort St. George*, Vol. IV, 1686–87, *Letters to Tellicherry*, Vol. I (1726–28), Madras, 1934; letter dated 18 November 1727. Dutch records mention the role played by Armen landsmen in Travancore (Ashin Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade*, p. 23 footnote no. 3).

⁷¹ M. Rajarajavarma Raja, 'Some Travancore Dynastic Records', *Kerala Society Papers Series I - Doc. H* (AD 1696).

⁷² *Mattalam Records*, c. 2600.0.85 (AD 1721) References to *arsuppadi jenam* as serving the

complained of inability to collect rent from their lands, and resisted the attempts by the ruler to impose a *rajakaram* on temple lands for maintaining the cavalry. The temple authorities even resorted to *pattini* (a protest fast) to force the ruler to pay compensation for the offences done by him and his predecessors to the temple, to no avail.⁷³ Although Rama Varma asked the *pillamar* and his representatives to observe *kilmariyadai*, there is no indication that the instruction was followed.⁷⁴ All these point to a situation when the principles of *kiliyakkam* and *kilmariyadai* no longer functioned.

The above outline shows that various factors contributed to the development of crisis conditions in the politico-economic order of late medieval Tiruvitamkur viz., the segmentary character of political power, where authority was in the hands of number of *swarupams* who were interrelated but quarrelling among one another, crisis in the management of temple lands and growth of intermediary landholders who rose to become temple and royal officials and were conferred *madampikur* by the rulers. However a single thread runs through these changes. The temples, brahman landlords, and segments of the ruling family held customary ownership of lands, and the intermediary landholders, although they had no customary rights, held the actual controlling rights. The period of crisis towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century showed that customary authority functioned only insofar as those who controlled the land allowed it to function. This situation could be resolved only by a complete restructuring of the politico-economic order that would provide upper hand to the ruler and lead to the consolidation of state power, as was attempted in Tiruvitamkur during the eighteenth century.⁷⁵

Although a definitive picture of other parts of Kerala is lacking, a process similar to that of Tiruvitamkur could be delineated. Numerous new chiefs were emerging in central Kerala like the *kaimal* and *kartha* families holding lands around Periyar river, and the chiefs of Karappuram. Their authority is indicated by the efforts by the Dutch to enter into separate agreements with these chiefs.⁷⁶ Similarly several major royal servants like Paliyath Achen,

ruler disappear by the end of the seventeenth century. By then, the *kuruppus* and *pillamar*, the groups that were part of *janam*, began to be identified with the intermediaries

⁷³ Ibid. c. 28 0.105, c. 81 0 179 (AD 1722).

⁷⁴ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. V. pp. 220–21 (AD 1721), 222–27 (AD 1723).

⁷⁵ Various aspects of this process has been discussed in Dick Kooiman, 'State Formation in Travancore, Problems of Revenue, Trade and Armament', paper presented at the Eleventh European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Amsterdam, 2–5 July 1990; P K Michael Tharakan, 'Control over trade and temples, standing army and public works. A study of state formation in Travancore, 1729–1798', paper presented to the Indian History Congress, 47th session, Srinagar, 1986; Susan Bayly, 'Hindu Kingship and Origins of Community Religion, State & Society in Kerala (1750–1850)', *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. XVIII 2, 1984

⁷⁶ Dutch Records, Treaties Vol. I, quoted in K M. Panikkar, *A History of Kerala 1498–1801*, p. 200.

Naykkaruveettil Achen were also independent landholders rendering services to the rulers. The Dutch control over the Kochi royal family towards the end of the seventeenth century was resented by the land holders who rebelled against the authority of the ruler.⁷⁷ By the eighteenth century, *kanam* holdings had become the major form of landholding in central Kerala and several communities, including Christians and Muslims, are mentioned as *kanam* holders.⁷⁸

Evidence regarding the growth of *kanakkar* and a class of intermediaries are found from Malabar. Forms of *kanam* and *otti* had become the predominant form around Kozhikode.⁷⁹ In south Malabar the temple lands were managed and protected by local landholders as *kaval* or *cangatam*. The share of the produce received by these landholders was called *kavalpalam*.⁸⁰ Large *kanam* holders were growing under more traditional *janmis* in other places also. The available evidence also shows that the customary authority of the *swarupams* and *janmis* were being broken by intermediary classes. Thus Randattara Achens, Iravanattu Nambiar and the Mappilas of Peringottur undermined the authority of Kolathunad in their areas. Internecine quarrels within the customary lands also demonstrated their weakness like the quarrels between *Tekkilamkur* and *Vadakkilamkur* in Kolathiri Kingdom and between *Patinjare Kovilakam* and *Kilakke Kovilakam* in the Samutiri Kingdom.

The growth and extension of *kanam* tenure and its numerous variations and extensions including *kulikkanam* and debt bonds had resulted in a new type of landholding where the landholder gained relative freedom and ability to extend his occupation of land for long periods, thus enabling him to increase his controlling rights over land. *Kanam* and its variations were found in association with the growing intermediary class who held positions as servants, militia and accountants. This form of association indicates that although the land ownership stayed with the traditional landlords, the entire process of ensuring that the customary ownership was actually sustained lay with the intermediaries. This dichotomy between customary ownership and actual control is found throughout Kerala. This enabled the latter to gain privileges (including *madampikur*) and make themselves indispensable. When their rights were threatened, then they could organise themselves and try to undermine customary authority itself as happened in Tiruvitamkur and Kochi at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 203–4

⁷⁸ Several instances of *kanam* holdings by Christians and Muslims towards the end of the eighteenth century are found in the *Blue Book of Cutch*. See *escheat* case related to Paleli Kilmana Illam, Kanayannur Taluk

⁷⁹ Nambutiri, 'Samutiri Caritrattile Kanappurungal' Appendix 2 2, 2 3 (AD 1548–52). Out of the 24 transactions mentioned in these documents 18 are *otti* deeds associated with Mangat Achen, the chief official of Samutiri

⁸⁰ M G S Narayanan, 'Introduction', *Vanjeri Granthavali*, p xxiv The remuneration for *kaval* was paid by each landholder with a fixed share piece of land (*Talaviri Kavalpalam*) Docs. 1A, 2A, 3A (AD 1541), 11A (AD 1549), 13A (AD 1565) etc., mention *kavalpalam*

III

The *janmam-kanam* relation described by the British officials was thus not a static entity, but was embedded in a dynamic process. Medieval land-ownership based on *kiliyakkam* and *kilmaryadai* was undergoing a serious crisis during the eighteenth century. In Tiruvitamkur, the customary forms of politico-economic power had given way to a unitary formal kingship supported by a new politico-legal apparatus.⁸¹ The power of intermediaries including *madampis* and accountants was destroyed, and along with it went the autonomous character of the temple *sanketam* and the autonomous authority of the brahmans. The customary privileges of the *janmi* were restricted to limited territories, that too under the politico-legal apparatus of the new state formation. The land survey and settlements of 1739–40, 1751–54 and 1773 enforced a proper revenue administration where all types of lands except those specifically exempted from taxation, were expected to pay revenue and the privileges of temples, brahmans and other landowners were formally fixed. Finally, the State itself owned most of the lands (called *pandaravaga*) but enforced formal control, instead of depending on customary obligations.⁸²

Similar processes were taking place in Kochi also. The Kochi Rajas were able to extend the tenure of customary authority only with the military and political backing of the Dutch. As Dutch authority waned they were unable to hold on, and could not offer resistance to the expansionist designs of Tiruvitamkur and Samutiri, and later the Mysore rulers. In this background, a major effort at suppressing recalcitrant nobles and intermediaries was attempted by the minister of a Kochi Raja, Paliyath Achen during the middle of the eighteenth century.⁸³ This process was completed under Rama Varma

⁸¹ It would seem that this would fit into the model of 'Low State demand and high stratification' advanced by Christopher and Susan Bayly. 'Eighteenth century state forms and the Economy' in Clive Dewey, ed., *Arrested Development of India*, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 66–90 who state that 'by dispossessing rivals and seizing their *janam* rights the new dynasty succeeded in building up a huge royal demesne which was cultivated by predial serfs' (p. 83). However, the 'aggrandizing monarch' was the product of intense conflict between the traditional landowning class and the growing class of intermediaries. The result of this conflict was also that the customary landownership, including that of the ruler was destroyed, and state control over land was established on a new basis.

⁸² A brief survey of the salient features of the Land settlement in the eighteenth century Tiruvitamkur could be found in *Travancore Land Manual*, Vol. IV, pp. 89–143. This formal control was given a politico-religious authority, through placing the entire lands controlled by the king to the deity of Thiruvananthapuram temple (*Trippadidanam*). For the significance of *Trippadidanam* Susan Bayly, 'Hindu Kingship and origins of community'.

⁸³ C. Achyutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, pp. 118–19. These steps included the confiscation of the properties of the chiefs, Muriyanad Nambiar and Velos Nambiar and partly those of Thalappalli Raja and Koratti Kaimal. An administrative structure similar to Tiruvitamkur was also introduced. See K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *Kochirayacartram*, Kozhikode 1989, Chapter 11.

'Saktan Thampuran' who controlled the administration towards the end of the eighteenth century, when he uprooted the power of a number of nobles.⁸⁴ Preliminary efforts at a land settlement was also made during this period.⁸⁵

The pattern of changes taking place in Tiruvitamkur and Kochi showed that the ownership/control dichotomy in the medieval land relations was being transformed. In Tiruvitamkur, the king held 'ownership' rights, in the medieval sense, over *pandaravaga* lands and the temples held such rights over *sreepandaravaga* lands. However this 'ownership' was no longer customary, dues were fixed and pattern of payment was also determined. Nor could the tenant occupy his lands under customary rights. Permanent leases and mortgages were converted into birthright of the cultivator (*kudijenmam*).⁸⁶ Lease transactions were documented and brought under the state organisation. *Kulikkannam*, with *naduvukkur* was encouraged, particularly in garden crops and lands recently brought under cultivation.⁸⁷ Thus the land surveys apparently resulted from a two-pronged strategy. The first was to organise tenurial holdings in order to maximise the resources mobilised by the state which would enable it to maintain the new state apparatus, and the second was to encourage productivity in cash crops and extension of cultivation which would enhance the state financial reserves and create a marketable surplus, that would facilitate export trade.⁸⁸ These features indicated that ownership-control dichotomy was giving way to state ownership and control and personal initiative by the cultivators as a guided activity by the state.

This form of consolidation of the state did not take place in Kochi. The evidence from the late eighteenth century showed that ownership rights of the *janmis* had not been fully marginalised and only a part of the lands were

⁸⁴ C. Achyuta Menon *op cit.* p 133, K.P. Padmanabha Menon *op cit* pp 683-84, also the biography by Puttezhathu Raman Menon *Saktan Thampuran*, Kozhikode, 1958.

⁸⁵ A *ketteluttu* (Survey based on Oral testimony) was attempted in AD 1762 and the dues from the paddy fields were fixed in AD 1789 Padmanabha Menon *op cit* p 719.

⁸⁶ Agastheeswaram Taluk Records Vilangiper of AD 1750, *Travancore Land Revenue Manual*, Vol. V Lands settled as *chora ottu* (Permanent mortgage) in AD 1738 was resettled as *kudijenmam* See also *Show Case Records* No 78, AD 1780

⁸⁷ *Mattlakam Records* c 2252 O. 834 (AD 1743) gives details regarding rent from garden crops and also the provisions for *nativukkur* (concessions given for fresh planting)

⁸⁸ This would bring back the role of trade in the eighteenth century transformation, which has been forcefully argued by Kooiman, 'State Formation in Travancore Problems of Revenue'. The role of trade in the transformation cannot be denied but its impact can only be studied in relation to the transformation of indigenous economic relations of production and distribution and the articulation of cash transactions in these relations. The transformation of Tiruvitamkur from 'a vague segmentary state' to a 'strong militarily and fiscally more developed power' is a complex politico-economic process that had been taking place for about a century. Trade did act as a necessary condition, but the transformation has to be studied taking into account its other variables also in which transformation of land relations appears to be crucial

held as *pandaravaga* or State lands.⁸⁹ The land surveys only systematised the collection of rent, like the payment of *mupra* and *kettuthengu*, and the tenurial forms.⁹⁰ However, this form of intervention by the state was a violation of the *maryadai* based on local traditions, and hence the dues received by the land owner could no longer be termed as customary. Land mortgages were being used to develop new land holdings as shown by several transactions with Konkani brahmans, Christians etc.⁹¹ However, *kanam* holders had become powerful with the traditional *janmi* only retaining nominal rights.

The situation was apparently different in Malabar, where no effort to intervene in customary land rights or conduct a land settlement took place under the local rulers. An explanation of this feature may be crucial not only for understanding the land relations that existed during British occupation but also in answering the question of why Kozhikode, which was apparently the most powerful Kerala kingdom, could not effect a transformation of politico-economic order similar to that of Tiruvitamkur.

Evidence from Malabar during the eighteenth century, shows that large scale *kanam* transactions were taking place, particularly in the region around Bharatapuzha.⁹² Lands were being held under *kulikkanam* tenure. However, the spread of *kulikkanam* tenure was limited, and *kulikkanam* did not acquire the importance that it had in Tiruvitamkur. This was presumably because the terrain in Malabar, with its hills and valleys and elevated regions, did not permit large-scale expansion of cultivation. Even by the end of the eighteenth century more than two-thirds of the land surface in North Malabar was filled with forests.⁹³ Extension of cultivation was possible only in South Malabar, where *kanam* and *kulikkanam* holdings developed and which became the focus of contention among various chiefs and rulers prior to British occupation. The Samutiri himself was looking to this region as his resource base.

Because of these features, a conflict between the growing intermediary class and the customary owners did not develop as in the case of Tiruvitamkur and Kochi. Conflicts were manifested in the quarrels between the two brahman factions *panniyur kur* and *chovvara kur* in the Bharathapuzha basin, in which numerous non-brahman customary lords played their role.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Documents collected in the *Blue Book*, *op cit*, mention that *pandaravaga* and *janmam* lands, and major *janmi* families like Paliyath Achen remained powerful.

⁹⁰ *Blue Book*, Inam cases No. 1 & 2 of village No. 1 Chennamangalam Cochin Taluk Documents of AD 1780 and AD 1781.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* Escheat case No. 6 of Kanayannur Taluk. A number of *kanam* holders of Paleli Illam were Christians.

⁹² See documents in *Vanjeri Granthavari* and K K N. Kurup, ed., *Kavalappara papers*, Kozhikode 1984, for the preponderance of *kanam* holdings.

⁹³ F. Buchanan, *A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara & Malabar*, Vol. II, Delhi, 1988, pp. 501-2.

⁹⁴ This conflict called *kur matsaram* had obscure legendary origins, see K V. Krishna Iyer *Zamorins of Calicut*, Kozhikode, 1938, pp. 97-102. Even in the eighteenth century, families

The intermediary classes could sustain themselves in this conflict by allying themselves with one customary ruler or the other. The conflict resulted in the breaking of the authority of Valluvanad *swarupam* which controlled the Bharatapuzha basin. Although the Samutiri technically won the conflict, real control was vested in the hands of several *janmis* and intermediary land holders.⁹⁵ This resulted in the parcellisation of authority and resources in the Bharatapuzha region. This became crucial in the ensuing conflict between Samutiri and Kochi. The presence of the Europeans, first the Portuguese and then the Dutch meant that the sustenance of a political allegiance on the basis of customary right was important for both sides. This conflict also meant that ideal conditions for agricultural expansion and the control exercised by the intermediaries did not exist in the region. The intermediaries could not mobilise enough resources to break the customary rights on their own. The weakening of Kochi due to internecine quarrels among various Tayvalis, inability to ensure the allegiance of intermediaries and the waning of Dutch power, enabled Samutiri to annex large territories during the middle of the eighteenth century. But this did not imply a transformation as in the case of Tiruvitamkur, and merely an extension of customary political authority. The intervention of Haider and Tipu, the rulers of Mysore, during the second half of the eighteenth century prevented a consolidation of even this form.

Northern Malabar did not have the same level of agrarian expansion as in South Malabar. Although customary authority of the *swarupams* was being undermined, the intermediaries did not have the opportunity for economic expansion as in other parts. Even *kanam* and *kulikkanam* tenures were less developed.

Hence, despite the growth of *kanam* and *kulikkanam* tenures, the forms of ownership and control in Malabar did not have the necessary dynamism. Benefits from the overseas trade at Kozhikode and Kannur augmented the resources of their respective rulers, but it did not aid the process of transformation of agriculture, because of internal constraints. The expansion of garden crop cultivation to provide for increased overseas trade was comparatively less, and there was no incentive from customary authority. Hence, the objective conditions that assisted the transformation in Tiruvitamkur did not exist in Malabar.

The sway of the customary authority in Malabar was disrupted by Mysore invasions. The revenue settlement under Haider Ali and Tipu imposed an

and *swarupams* were identified by their *kur*. J.V. Gollennesse, in his Memorandum of the administration in Malabar refers to the king of Cochín as the 'head of Chodircur' (*Chovvarakkur*) and Samutiri as the head of 'Pandircur' (*pannyurkur*) faction (A. Galletti, *The Dutch in Malabar*, Madras, 1911, pp. 60, 65).

⁹⁵ This included Vettath Raja, Kavalappara Nayar, Pannathoor Nambidi, who held crucial positions around Bharatapuzha, and who shifted their allegiance from one ruler to the other *Ibid.*, pp. 61–63

uneven, and often heavy, revenue assessment on the cultivators.⁹⁶ This assessment not only did away with the customary payments and obligations but also forced the *janmis* to pay dues, which went against the traditional concept of *janmam* itself. The revenue assessment also showed that the rights of the cultivator over the land were recognised.⁹⁷ However, the heavy revenue assessment and state monopolies over trade introduced by Mysore rulers did not facilitate expansion and transformation of agriculture.

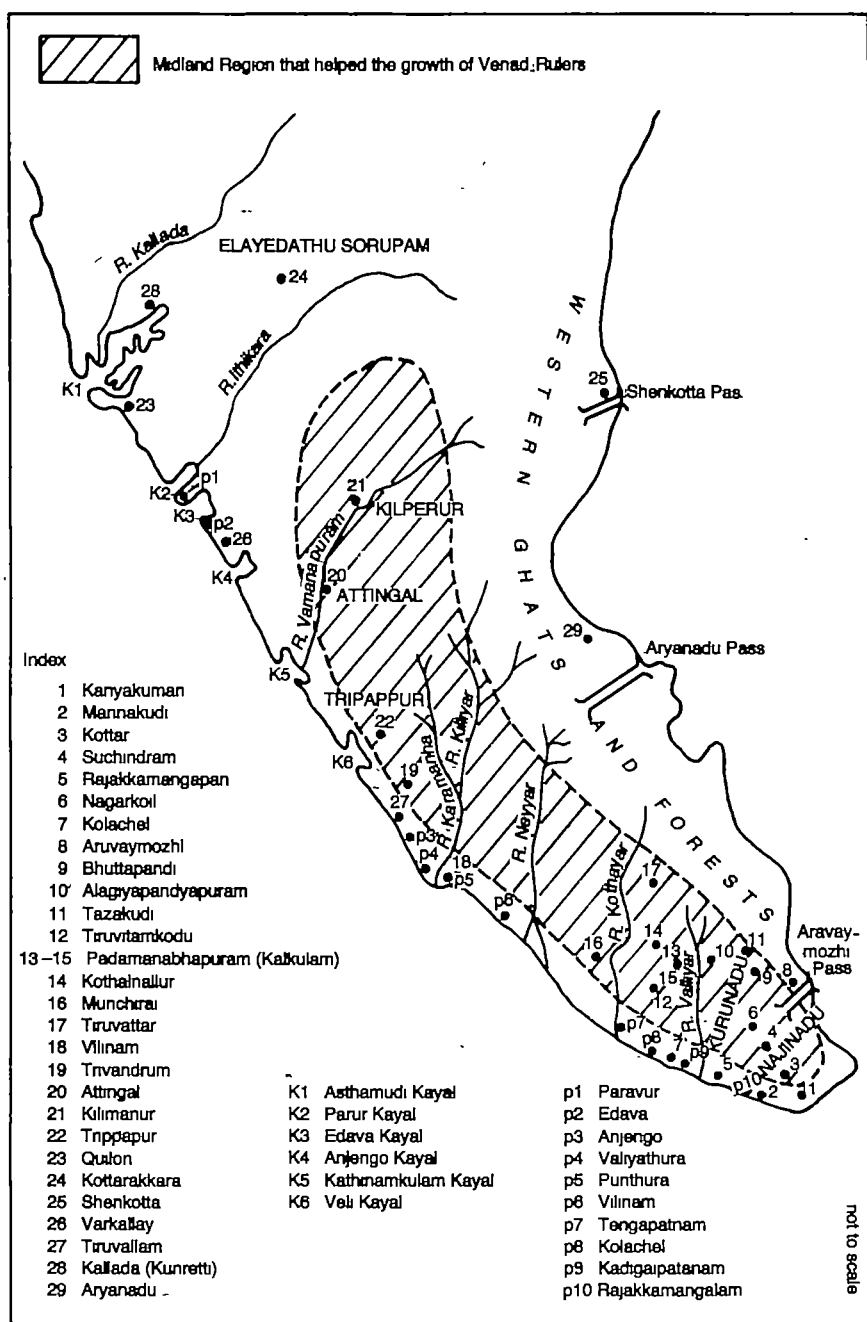
It is clear that by the end of the eighteenth century, the traditional land rights were undergoing changes all over Kerala. The ownership-control dichotomy that developed within customary relations resulted in the formation of a new landholding class that occupied the intermediary position in the politico-economic order. The growth of land control by the intermediaries resulted in changes in the nature of customary authority itself, which, in turn gave rise to crisis conditions in the medieval order by the eighteenth century. In Malabar the growth of the intermediaries, which was slowed down by geo-economic factors and political exigencies, could not facilitate the breakdown of customary authority itself.

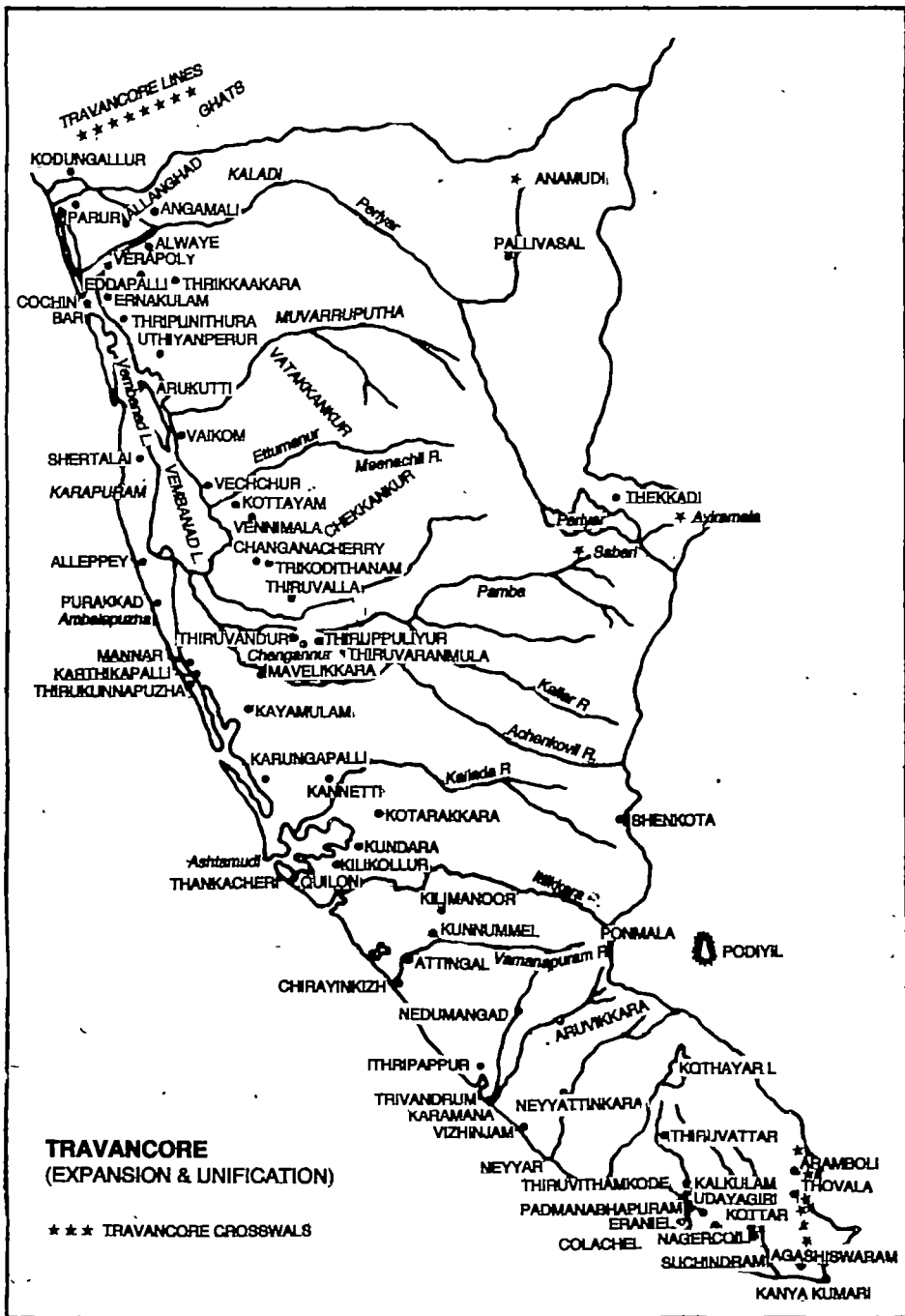
However, with the growth of ownership-control dichotomy and the intervention of Mysore, customary authority was on the wane, and land control in south Malabar passed into the hands of *kanam* and *kulikkanam* holders. The *janmis*' position had become precarious on account of the new revenue assessment, and he could survive only by seizing the real control over the lands.⁹⁸ Otherwise he would face extinction as in Tiruvitamkur; even in Kochi the authority of the customary *janmi* had been undermined. However, with British occupation, the *janmis* were transformed from customary to statutory landowners, and new privileges, including the right to enhance rent and legal eviction enabled them to sustain themselves as a class, and improve their position.

⁹⁶ The share of the *pattam* levied by Haider Ali's officials in South Malabar ranged from one-tenth to one-third. Tree tax was fixed on garden lands usually at the rate of two annas for every bearing coconut, four annas for jack, and twelve annas for every peppervine producing fifteen *seers* of green pepper. In North Malabar a different form of assessment was followed, where the Rajas had to pay the revenue from their lands as a lump sum. C. A. Innes and F. B. Evans, *Malabar*, Madras, 1951, pp. 324-27.

⁹⁷ W. Logan, *Malabar* Vol. I, Madras, 1951, p. 623.

⁹⁸ An analogous situation has been discussed in the case of Bengal towards the end of eighteenth century where the agrarian economy at the base was constituted by the creditor employers class of 'peasant landlords' (*jotedars*) and at the apex by the revenue collecting, peace-keeping class of zamindars. The changes in the agrarian economy during the second half of the eighteenth century had resulted in the decline of the power of the Zamindars, but with the Permanent Settlement of 1793, they were integrated to the bureaucratic coercive apparatus, whereby they were able to extend their authority (Ratnalekha Ray, *Change in Bengal Agrarian Society c. 1760-1850*, Delhi 1979). This formulation regarding zamindars and *jotedars* has been criticised recently by Rajat Datta, 'Agricultural production, Social participation and Domination in late 18th century Bengal: Towards an alternative explanation' *Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol. 17, No. 1, October 1989.





Book Reviews

WILLIAM CROOKE, *A Glossary of North Indian Peasant Life*, edited, with an Introduction, Appendices and Notes, by Shahid Amin, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989. liv, 290 pp., Rs. 185.

William Crooke is a familiar name to the students of north Indian history. In addition to his numerous ethnological notes and studies of folklore, his *A Rural and Agricultural Glossary for the N.W. Provinces and Oudh* (1888) has been extensively used for historical studies of north Indian society and culture. The present volume under review is a reprint of his *Materials for a Rural and Agricultural Glossary of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*. Originally printed in 1879, it was circulated widely within the colonial bureaucracy in order to elicit information for revision and correction, but was never published. Thus, although printed more than a century ago, it has not had a public existence. 'In a sense, therefore', the editor tells us, 'the present volume is a revised and enlarged edition of this lost text' (xix). In resurrecting this 'lost' text, the editor has added explanatory footnotes, an exhaustive index, colour plates and line drawings, seven appendices based on nineteenth-century published and unpublished material, a bibliography of sources that Crooke used in compiling the *Materials* and a long and insightful introduction situating the text.

A Glossary of North Indian Peasant Life provides and describes the indigenous terms used in the material culture of the north Indian countryside. It organises and groups these terms under such headings as 'Implements and Appliances Used in Agriculture and Rural Manufactures', 'General Agricultural Operations', 'The Native House' etc., which are then further subdivided into sections and numbered paragraphs. Individual entries are often elaborated, corrected, and even questioned by the editor's footnotes. In addition, the editor also directs the reader to other sources of information on particular terms (for example, pp. 77-78n).

If such editorial interventions often question the premises underlying particular entries (for example, Crooke's list of terms for 'Hindu vessels', on p. 44), they do not seriously undermine the positioning of the text as an exhaustive compendium of terms, like a dictionary. But it is not a dictionary. Whereas a dictionary uses an alphabetical classificatory system, *A Glossary* classifies social life according to categories with which the nineteenth-

century British rulers apprehended and reconstituted their subjects. This taxonomic strategy had two simultaneous effects: first, the simple mention and description of indigenous terms under master categories reformulated the cultural specificity and difference of north Indian peasants as an otherness; and second, this otherness—affirmed in the subordinate relationship of indigenous names of things to such seemingly-neutral terms as 'The Native House' and 'Agricultural Products'—universalised master categories. Through this double determination, achieved in textual classification and reconstitution, *A Glossary* positions itself as a social-scientific record of life in the north Indian countryside.

For such a reading of the text, the reader has to turn to the introduction. While this does not focus on the Self-Other strategy in colonial writings that efface difference and universalise the master discourse, it points out that nineteenth-century colonial texts like Crooke's achieve similar effects when they ignore changes in the indigenous vocabulary, and assume a static socio-economic and linguistic world. This is evident, the editor argues, in Crooke's coverage of those aspects of material culture that suggest continuity rather than change. For example, *A Glossary* records indigenous names for the tools of agricultural production and ignores changing socio-political contexts in which these instruments were utilised. Such a strategy of description 'produce[s] a homogenized representation of native life' (p. xxxix). Locating this strategy of *A Glossary* in nineteenth-century colonial pretexts, the introduction carefully reconstructs the textual history of Crooke's relationship with those who preceded him (for example, Buchanan and Elliot) and with those who came after him (for example, Grierson and Risley). This textual history is invaluable not only in situating this volume but also in understanding the formation of colonial discourses.

When seen as an example of colonial discoursé, the publication of *A Glossary* is a welcome event, particularly in view of the editor's excellent introduction. But, as the editor notes, its use as an unmediated source of information on north Indian peasant life is problematic, although that was the avowed purpose of its compilation. And yet, from the editor's additions to the volume—colour plates and line drawings, explanatory footnotes, appendices—it would appear that the present edition shares the text's original premise. The reader has to negotiate this tension between *A Glossary*'s self-representation as an unmediated record of the north Indian peasant life and its problematisation by the introductory essay as a colonial text.

Gyan Prakash

Department of History
Princeton University

DANIEL GOLD, *The Lord as Guru: Hindi Sants in the North Indian Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, 250 pp., Rs. 165.

The Lord as Guru is a well-researched book on a topic that has in current years dominated the attention of social anthropologists dealing with India. Together with these other works, it represents a shift in interest from the textual study of Sanskritic Hinduism as well as the study of village-level, folk Hinduism, towards the study of a third tradition or stream, that of the *Sants* or the individual bearers of salvation.

As Gold shows, Hinduism has had a coherent, identifiable *Sant* tradition in North India well before Kabir's time. He attempts to trace the historical and intellectual roots of this tradition, 'the genealogy' of the *Sants* and employs the language of kinship to do so. He traces the phases of a *sant* 'lineage' through its inception by a single, notable charismatic saint, its continuation by others who consider the former as a 'guru' and the final phase when the lineage becomes a 'panth'. The last phase represents the 'routinization' and institutionalisation of the original *Sant's* charisma.

Gold looks at some famous *Sant* lineages such as those of the Kabirpanthis, the Charandasis and the Radhasoamis. He examines in detail how *Sant mat* or teachings are communicated through *sant bani*. He highlights the role of 'sound' or the 'word' as the main medium of communication. A very important point that Gold brings up in this context is the use of vernacular languages by the *sants*. The *sants* used *khari boli* or other variants of non-classical spoken languages. They used everyday folk and artisan idioms to convey their message. They also used well-known folk legends and love tales to depict the love for God and desirability of union with him. They had a mixed Hindi-Vaishnava/Urdu-Sufi devotional vocabulary that non-lettered classes could understand. All this set them apart from Brahmanical religion which used Sanskrit to preserve its elite status and also necessitated the use of specialist mediators to interpret the religious message. *Sants*, on the other hand, emphasised the direct accessibility of the divine and the divine message. The opposition to established religion professed by most *sants* also devalued ritual.

The category of the *Sant* challenges the Priest-King-Renouncer triad of traditional Hinduism. He is not a priest who sanctifies the establishment nor does he renounce the world. To his followers he does not recommend asceticism or a withdrawal from the world. Further, his status as a holy person is achieved and not ascribed. Often there were ambiguities about the *Sant's* image and status. For example, many times it was not clear whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim. This allowed the *Sant* to stand as a 'channel of grace' independent of both Hindu and Islamic heritages. After his death, adherents of both religions would try to claim him as their own, in order to rehabilitate and absorb him within either dominant stream.

Discussing the social origins and backgrounds of *sants*, Gold shows that they were often from the lower castes and classes with low ritual status, or from trading communities or marginal groups. Gold says 'they arose from common, unlettered classes to transcend orthodox doctrines'. He however, fails to bring out the significance of the background of the *sants*. The *sants* espoused and emphasised a different set of values from other religious specialists. They often recommended the path of the householder rather than that of the renouncer; they emphasised work rather than idleness and begging. Many of them chose the artisan's work as a metaphor for God and the world (two of the significant occupations were that of the weaver and the potter). They advocated community rather than separation in daily intercourse, encouraging communal eating across caste barriers. Their message challenged not only established religious boundaries but also socio-economic stratification. Often their role became one of resistance to tyrannical authority.

Gold, however, feels that 'although the image of the guru provides a link to the divine that bypasses customary ritual and his teachings present Hindu socio-religious hierarchy in a very dubious light', neither the image nor the teaching offer any full-scale social bonds to replace them. This however, does not seem to be true of sant-centred sects like the Radhasoamis. From this reviewer's knowledge of the villagers following the Beas *sants*, the latter have replaced institutional Hinduism in the life of their followers.

Gold's book is an important contribution to the sociology of religion and needs to be commended for its high level of scholarship. It has also come at a time when the phenomenon of *sants* of one kind or another has again erupted on the Indian religious scene.

Ravinder Kaur

4616 46th. St., N.W.
Washington D.C. 20016
USA

STEPHEN HENNINGHAM, *A Great Estate and its Landlords in Colonial India: Darbhanga 1860-1942*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, 179 pp., Rs. 185.

This slim volume (just over 150 pages of text) declares its focus to be estate management and agrarian relations, but in that respect it arrives at an unfortunate moment—one occupied not just by Anand Yang's *The Limited Raj. Agrarian Relations in Colonial India, Saran District, 1793-1920* (Berkeley 1989), but by Jacques Pouchepadass's huge, magisterial *Paysans de la plaine du Gange. Croissance agricole et société dans le district de Champaran (Bihar) 1860-1950* (Paris 1989), a work which is surely destined to be counted

among the few classics in the fields of colonial agrarian history and Indian agricultural development. Suddenly students of Bihar are spoiled for choice. The matters on which Pouchepadass rightly concentrates (questions of agriculture and production, indeed economic questions in general) are among those to which Henningham gives little attention, and insufficient to meet even his restricted objective of explaining the history of one estate and the personal preoccupations of its maharajas, or for his more general point on what he is pleased to describe (after David Arnold) as evolving hegemonic structures.

On the other hand, within an uncomplicated account, there are still some valuable insights. First, the book shows how landed authority was based both on local, social power and on external, state influence—and consistently so (though in changing forms) from Mughal times and throughout British rule. We see this in the relatively long time taken to establish British authority (ch. 1), and in the wider role of the maharajas of Darbhanga (chs. 4, 5 and 7). The latter is reflected in Rameshwar Singh's crucial backing for Hindu orthodoxy in the early twentieth century, and in Kameshwar's charitable works in the 1930s (alongside his endorsements of the British and landlordism), but most completely in the later nineteenth century with Lakshmeshwar Singh: not only his support for the landed interest, the Indian National Congress and social reform, but also his patronage of religion (including cow protection), education and other charities, his patrician detachment from the details of routine *zamindari* administration, and his expenditure on aristocratic display.

Second (chs. 2 and 3), Henningham documents the shift from 'farming' or *thikadari* to bureaucratic or *tahsildari* systems of management, initially under the Court of Wards. This paralleled earlier alternations in north Bihar and elsewhere and at various levels of the control over surplus—for example in the mid-eighteenth century, when the shift to rent and revenue-farming was apparently associated with political uncertainty, pressure to increase returns, and possibly agricultural decline. (See, for example, Madhavi Bajekal, 'Agricultural production in six selected qasbas of eastern Rajasthan (c. 1700–1780)', London Ph.D. 1990.) By contrast, in Darbhanga raj, in conditions of relative political and legal security, more direct control seems to have been designed to maintain or increase the estate's share of an output that was increasing in value but arguably, for legal and demographic reasons, becoming harder to extract in the form of rent and dues. It was, I suggest, a *return* to more direct involvement in production (including capital inputs and incentives, and maximisation of *sir* lands) which had been less necessary earlier in the nineteenth century with readily-enhanced rents and the then-declining pressure of revenue-payments.

Third, the Darbhanga example also shows the ways in which not only landlord priorities and style, but the fragmentation and dispersal

of the lands of the estate (and other impediments), restricted the ability of such direct intervention to intensify production, with regard partly to making capital inputs but perhaps especially to effecting changes in agricultural methods and goals.

Finally—and also arising out of this last point—Henningham illustrates the necessary role of village elites and indeed of a whole range of levels of control. Despite an initial obeisance to so-called ‘peasant autonomy’, he thus shows the extent to which the society was not made up of elites and masses, in the binary sense encouraged originally by Pareto or Mosca, but of various hierarchies and overlapping circles of influence and status. This complexity—social, tenurial and economic—was also important for the resistance described in this book, new forms of which emerged as conditions changed. There are useful pages here on Swami Vidyanand’s protest movement against Darbhanga raj at the end of the first world war, and on the *bakasht* agitation which first came to a head just before the second, during the Congress ministry.

Peter Robb

School of Oriental and African Studies
London

R.P.T. DAVENPORT-HINES, and GEOFFREY JONES, eds., *British Business in Asia since 1860*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, xvi + 301 pp., £ 35.00.

Business history has come a long way from its early origins in the glossy literature produced by under-funded historians for firms and business houses celebrating anniversaries. More and more, the unremitting search for sources has led historians to turn to business records. This interest paralleled the micro-economic backlash in economic theory following the demise of old-fashioned Keynesianism and, wisely deployed, offers the promise of also providing the micro-foundations for wider histories.

Although recent years have seen a few volume-length works on firms with major interests in Asia, the field has been off to a slow and fitful start in this region. Hence there are good reasons to welcome a volume such as the one under review. One aim of the book is to stimulate interest in the field and set out possible research areas. It is also intended to appeal to British firms doing business in Asia. If historians have turned to business for money and sources, will businesses also look to historians for insights?

The book itself is of a somewhat uneven quality and many of the essays address the latter of the two aims better than they do the former. The problem partly is in the nature of the subject matter. Compelled to offer general accounts of many diverse types of business, country essays have

not always managed to draw the fine distinction between economic history and, what one may call, macro-business history, notwithstanding the general validity of Platt's point about business history being able to offer new perspectives on many key issues in modern economic history. The strongest essays in the book are really about countries like Iran in which British business was represented by one or two big firms or about countries like Siam (now Thailand) or Malaya and Singapore where British business was concentrated in one or two industries.

At the other extreme is the Asian part of Russia. No industry or British company dominated the region even though some of the latter were subsidiaries of early multi-national corporations so that the story which is told is more generally about British trade with Russia and is based almost entirely upon secondary sources and consular records. Source limitations perhaps dictated this approach but some discussion of them would have been useful. I also found it odd that Lloyd George's move to set up a closed-door consortium of British (and some European) businesses to finance (and supply) Russia's post-war reconstruction efforts finds no mention. Nothing came of it, but the experience is of some contemporary interest.

The essay on China by Osterhammel and that on India by Tomlinson walk the tightrope more adroitly. Tomlinson's essay is, as usual, competently done, though I for one wished he had discussed exchange banks at some length. The essay treads familiar ground for those who have followed his earlier work in this field but he has an useful appendix on sources which students might find useful. Other contributors should have been asked to do the same. Osterhammel's essay and the one on Thailand by Malcolm Falkus are notable for their discussion of the regional links of British businesses. It is now being increasingly recognised that these links, in sustaining which indigenous and British businessmen in China, India and South East Asia played important roles, helped move capital, entrepreneurial, managerial and supervisory skills, labour as well as goods within the region. Business sources are likely to be particularly rich on this subject; they might even be the only material available on it. Hence a more detailed discussion, perhaps in a separate chapter, of the link and its significance to the region's economies would have enhanced the book's value.

Thailand and Malaya/Singapore are interesting exceptions to the story of the decline of British business in Asia. In both countries, British business interests were largely concentrated in extractive industries with growing markets in the industrial world, i.e., tin and rubber or in resources in the process of exhaustion like teak. Beginning with small 'free-standing companies', British investment in these sectors began to show a tendency towards concentration. This process was assisted by technological factors, market conditions, the responses to them of the British and colonial governments and producers principally through commodity control schemes,

and not least, changes in leasing rights on land and forests. A comparison of the Thai experience with the Malayan and of both of these with the Dutch business experience in rubber and tin in the East Indies would have been of particular interest. One hopes some one will go on from here to design a comparative volume which also focuses on Asia as a regional economy.

G. Balachandran

Delhi School of Economics

LARRY DIAMOND, JUAN J. LINZ, SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET, eds.,
Democracy in Asia, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1989, 487 pp.,
Rs. 295.

This book is part of four-volume series on democracy in developing countries, apparently inspired—rather like the controversial studies on political development in the 1960s—by a concern for identifying the conditions for stable democracy. Avowedly following Robert Dahl, the concept of ‘democracy’ has been interpreted purely politically, the theoretical brief of the individual contributors being to relate democratic success or failure to a variety of factors, including political culture, legitimacy, history, class structure and inequality, ethnic/racial/religious cleavages, state structures, leadership, development performance and international factors.

The choice of a fairly mixed bag of ten countries is justified partly by the conviction that capitalism and democracy have always been closely associated, and hence the inclusion of countries which are not quite democratic but have capitalist economic systems. The decisive criterion however is that all the countries selected have historically had some experience with democratic government. On the whole, India and Papua New Guinea are deemed the most successful—because enduring—democracies; Turkey is described as a country on the way to ‘democratic consolidation’; the Philippines and South Korea are ‘important tests of the democratic prospect in Asia’; Pakistan is ‘moving towards’ rule by civilian elected politicians; while Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand are examples of ‘semidemocratic and authoritarian regimes’.

One of the avowed aims of this volume is to develop a theory of democracy, in the light of the mass of empirical evidence available from the so-called ‘new nations’. But it is difficult to assess this book in terms of its own theoretical ambitions, because the picture that it presents is somewhat contradictory. In Sri Lanka and Malaysia, the failure of democracy is linked to ethnic cleavages, while in India and Papua New Guinea, democracy is described as successful despite such cleavages and because of democratic political cultures. But then Pakistan has historical and cultural

traditions similar to those of India, but much less success with democracy. In Turkey, too, a political culture in which harmony is valued and opposition feared, has worked against the institutionalisation of the idea of an opposition, while leadership commitment to democracy is considered to have advanced the democratic cause. The analyses of South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia are ambiguous and inconclusive. South Korea is mysteriously described as standing on the threshold of an evolutionary process by which democracy will take root. In Thailand, while no autonomous forces have emerged to challenge the power of the military and the bureaucracy, and pluralist democracy is therefore unlikely to develop, the semidemocratic system must, it is argued, be maintained so that a more participatory government can emerge in the long run.

The assessments of democracy in the ten countries studied suggest that this volume is more in the nature of an investigation into the breakdown of democracy in Asia or, at best, its precarious and periodic survival. The essays, originally presented at a seminar on democracy in developing countries, seem to be weighed down by the strain of conforming to the set theme, frequently rummaging for glimpses of democratic functioning from at least some patently unsuccessful experiments with democracy. Perhaps a later volume will be tempted to undertake a fundamental re-examination of the theoretical assumptions of this one.

Niraja Gopal Jayal

Centre for Political Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

R.K. KANCHAN. *Hindu Kingdoms of South-East Asia*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1990, xxi+372 pp., Rs. 225.

This book is an account of the Hindu migration to South-East Asia, consistently referred to as colonies throughout the book. It deals with the nature, antiquity and causes of migration, land-route and sea-routes of the migrants, Hindu kingdoms in Burma, Malaya, the Indonesian islands, Philippines etc., the process of 'colonialisation' and the effects of Hindu civilisation on these kingdoms.

The book does not contain any footnote, nor does it refer to original sources in the bibliography. The explanations and the conclusions are puerile. To cite an example at random, according to the author, the liberty to marry outside one's caste was one of the social causes of migration. It may also interest the readers to know that the author believes that Ashvathama, Kripacharya and Kritavarma, the 'three criminals', fled to Sumatra, Burma and Yavadvipa respectively, after killing the five sons of Draupadi

and were the earliest Hindu settlers there. There is little to recommend in the book.

Kunal Chakrabarti

Centre for Historical Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

DIRK H.A. KOLFF, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: the ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, Cambridge, 1990, xvi + 217 pp., £ 30.

For decades, now, we have had detailed histories of the Mughal Empire which emphasised order, stability, and the regularisation of all institutional functions. Authority was assumed to flow from the top down, and local groups opted into the system both because of the overwhelming might and the obvious advantages of a 'Mughal Peace'. The current exciting work on the Mughal Empire challenges all these assumptions. The importance of this monograph, comes from a viewpoint radically different from the Aligarh school.

Kolff opens with two statements on perspective—that the military was the most important redistributive system in Indian Islamic states (including the Lodis and Afghans, as well as the Mughals), and that one of the most central problems of these states was the control of an armed peasantry. The first chapter assembles evidence for a supply of armed peasants, such as the tradition of martial sports, and the ethos of long-distance service in a war band. Chapter two shows how a successful Afghan, Sher Shah, used the treasure from captured forts and rajas to quickly recruit a large army from these peasant forces. The remainder of the book follows the effects of recruitment and service on three groups, all from an area between Benares and Patna. Each had to work out not only the terms of service, but two much more intractable problems, the effects of service on their own kinship network, and the development of an ethos which allowed service in Muslim state.

Both of these themes focus on the development of the term 'Rajput'. Kolff follows the lead of Norman Ziegler, who, some years ago, developed the idea that the 'Rajput' was a category created out of the interaction of military service in the Mughal army. The emerging ethos drew from several sources—Muslim ideas of seclusion of women, and Brahmanical ideas of ritual exclusion, for example. Kolff argues that, in this process, one of the traditions most heavily drawn upon was that of the war band (men not tied by kinship who followed a leader in hopes of glory and booty). He argues, mainly from folk tales collected in the nineteenth century, that the oldest layers of this 'Rajput' identity were from an open-status group of warriorascetics who wandered North India (1300–1500) in search of military patronage.

There were many twists and problems as the three different groups tried to find some workable terms of service to the Mughals. For example, what

about Muslim women married into the households of the larger war band leaders? They were anathema to the *ulema*, and one group was crushed over this issue. Another group foundered over the issue of service in a distant region. Such service would have taken the leader away from his forts, and allowed relatives to gain control. The Mughals also had their problems; patronising a leader at the expense of his relatives sometimes made him stronger than other important *amirs* of the empire. Occasionally, the Mughals crushed a family, only to take the remnants, as individuals, into the *man-sabdari* system. The Mughals' most successful solution was to recruit directly from the peasant-soldier labour market, bypassing the war band leaders. In the course of two centuries, certain groups became 'Rajput', while others—Bundelas, Bahelias, Pasis—never quite achieved such status. Kolff's main conclusion is that many of the terms described as 'castes' (defined by kinship, with closed boundaries) in the nineteenth century were, in fact, open, relational, and ascriptive terms in prior centuries. This is an important conclusion, and certainly one supported by the evidence on, for example, the development of the term 'Maratha'.

In spite of the importance of the approach and subject matter, in fairness, I must point out some problems of the book. First, it is a dense, difficult read. The introduction does not lay out the argument, and chapters lack introductory paragraphs of the main points to follow. The one map is inadequate for critical points, such as showing the area of origin of the warrior groups or the places to which they migrated. Important conclusions are often buried in the middle of paragraphs, surrounded by data. Second, as history, the book is extremely patchy. Strongest on the rise of Sher Shah; it virtually skips the eighteenth century. There is no mention, for example, that the prime area of a couple of these warrior groups—eastern Malwa and Bundelkund—was a regularly administered Maratha province from 1740 until well into the nineteenth century. We get some material on British recruiting, but nothing on Maratha recruitment of military manpower in North India after 1770, though the forces of Shinde alone numbered in the tens of thousands. Similarly, Kolff has not used some important sources, especially for the eighteenth century. Two, which come to mind, are an older book by Raghbir Singh, *Malwa in Transition* (1931), and a newer book by Bhagwan Das Gupta, *Life and Times of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela* (1980). Both contain important letters and histories of the Rajputs and pseudo-Rajputs he is studying. Overall, there is far too much reliance on history as it is found in gazeteers and collections of folk tales. Nevertheless, the book is a good marker of the vitality of Mughal studies, which is finding conflict, negotiation, and struggle below the surface of the 'Mughal Peace'.

Stewart Gordon
135 S. Mansfield Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90036

BALDEV RAJ NAYAR, *India's mixed economy: The role of ideology and interest in its development*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, xi + 421 pp., Rs. 350.

The political economy of India has been a relatively neglected area of study. In recent years, a number of scholars, mostly political scientists, have tried to rectify this. Baldev Raj Nayar's book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the subject. His study centres around the political economy of the public sector. It attempts to analyse the role of ideology and interest in the creation of India's public sector which has come to dominate her economy. The author has left the performance of the public sector to other scholars—perhaps to economists. This is a pity because the author is better qualified to make an assessment with reference to the ideological and other goals the public sector was expected to achieve.

The economic performance of the public sector has, of course, been very poor. Its contribution to the GDP and investible resources has been less than satisfactory but that has not reduced its political appeal in India. Why? Nayar does not pose this question sharply or answer it directly. This question may be too narrowly focused from his point of view. Nevertheless, a patient reader is well rewarded and can draw his own conclusions if he is prepared to go along with the author who believes that the public sector needs to be studied in a 'broader and more comprehensive frame-work that looks at both its origins and its functions in relation to a number of societal interests.'

The growth of the public sector has taken place in India steadily over time. The author is justified, therefore, in taking a historical view of its creation. He divides its history into two periods: the Nehru era and the regime of Indira Gandhi. In Nehru's time the public sector acted as an entrepreneur on behalf of the state and in the later period it took the route of nationalisation to establish hegemony over the economy. In both cases, according to the author, the choice was ideologically inspired in favour of what he calls instrumental-socialist mixed economy or more simply, a transitional stage to socialism. This is not a value judgement but an empirical statement, says the author.

To sustain his thesis the author has undertaken an extensive *tour de horizon* of the historic confrontation of the rival ideologies of capitalism and socialism, the epochal process of modernisation and development and theories about the nature of the state. Against this theoretical background the author examines the role of class in the national movement, the evolution of Nehru's socialist ideology and his relationship to the capitalist class, and in the post-Nehru period, the break-up of the Congress party and the process of nationalisation that followed.

The contention that the public sector grew out of ideological preference is an overstatement. To a large extent it was the choice of an

economic strategy which gave high priority to heavy industry, entailing vast investments and unfamiliar technology that made the creation and expansion of the public sector a technical-economic necessity, whatever else it may have possessed by way of ideological and other attractions. The rationale for the creation of the public sector was also consistent with the opinion of the development economists of the time who emphasised the need for investment planning and direct public investment in view of the demonstrated market failure in the field of investment decisions. The author himself has referred to the compulsions of backwardness as the source of state intervention in the process of industrialising a poor agrarian economy.

The exposition of the theoretical context and the commentary that follows on the economic policies of the two periods covered, however, do not seem to be related to each other in a well defined and logical framework. For example, after reviewing liberal-democratic, orthodox Marxist and bureaucratic approaches to the analysis of the nature of the state the author has demonstrated successfully the application of Kalecki's thesis of 'intermediate regime', i.e., a regime in which intermediate strata of society control the state, to the Indian case. But while accepting the usefulness of Kalecki's model in this regard he has also rightly described it as 'over-deterministic' in the sense that some sections of these strata favour the socialist framework while some others do not. But the author has not identified these sections. Had he done so he would have had to confront more systematically the problem of asymmetry, ideological as well as in the matter of policy, in the attitude to big business and big farmers. Instead he is content with his remark about Nehru's inability to push his socialist policies in the agrarian field because of 'the enormous political power of the landed classes based on adult franchise'. He has not pursued the dynamics of the electoral process in an open polity. I suspect that the pursuit of such an enquiry is likely to destroy neat ideological formulations. Witness the inability of marxist parties to resist the highly sectarian demands of rich and middle farmers. He has not noted the apparent ideological contradiction in the fact that whereas big business was constrained public investment and policy incentives were extensively used for the growth and expansion of private sector in agriculture and small-scale industry. This is a major question of India's political economy that needs an adequate answer. Perhaps it is not fair to expect an answer to this and other related questions from the author whose work deals mainly with the industrial economy. It is his impressive scholarship and insight that makes one raise the issue.

To conclude, it must be said that even though the linkages between the theoretical part and the empirical part seems somewhat weak or occasionally unclear, the two parts stand on their merits very well and can be read independently. The author has to be congratulated for his

ideological agnosticism and his objectivity in the interpretation of facts and events.

P.N. Dhar

Institute of Economic Growth
University of Delhi

PAUL B. RICH, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, xiii + 272 pp., notes, bibliography, index, £ 25.

The title of this book is somewhat misleading. It is not an analysis of how the question of race and empire figured specifically in the programmes and campaigns of different British political parties. Rather, it is a masterly survey of the intellectual discourse on racial differences in relation to empire from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1960s. In the concluding chapter the author, instead of simply presenting a summing-up, carries his reflections to the mid-1980s, discussing Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher.

The chronological and intellectual sweep is vast. Dr Rich worked on this when he was associated with the Research Unit on Ethnic Relations at the University of Aston at Birmingham in the early 1980s. In justification of the exercise he writes, 'Since the field of race relations and ethnicity is a predominantly sociological and anthropological one, it was my keen wish to give the area an increasingly historical focus.' He was convinced of 'the significance and potentiality of intellectual history as a means of unravelling modes of intellectual enquiry and situating the seemingly fixed and proven patterns of thought that come to define an area of academic research and analysis' (p. xi). Official records and many valuable private archives have been used extensively, though I am a little surprised to find no mention of V.G. Kiernan's *Lords of Humankind* and Philip Mason's *Patterns of Dominance*. A reasonable degree of familiarity with British imperial history is assumed, which makes it a book for the specialist.

The introductory chapter unravels the 'key traditions of belief on race in British society'. Ideas on race in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were strongly shaped by the twin experience of imperial expansion overseas and industrial growth and class conflict in Britain. Taking this as a point of departure, the author describes how the evangelical anti-slavery impulse that had achieved the abolition of slavery in 1830 gave way to a 'more virulently racist hostility' exemplified in Thomas Carlyle's stereotype of the indolent Negro. Not only was this accompanied by the 'rise of anthropological' and 'scientific' racism (vide Robert Knox's *Races of Man*, 1859) but there developed a romantic tradition of the British mission, increasingly linked to overseas imperialism. By 'British' its protagonists meant 'Anglo-Saxon', and concern for the separate identity of Celtic peoples (the Welsh, Irish and Scots) got steadily muted. As Anthony Froude put it,

overseas colonies were a saving grace for the 'English race' which might 'for ages renew its mighty youth, bring forth as many millions as it would, and would still have means to breed and rear them strong as the best which she had produced in her early prime.' This sense of imperial superiority and imperial mission influenced the thought of liberal intellectuals like Lord Bryce.

The second chapter reiterates a not very original point—the late Victorian liberal attitude to the Negro (of the Aborigines Protection Societies) was compounded of a paternalist superiority complex and the tradition of cultural relativism in anthropology. For readers of this journal it would be of interest to note how the Government of India's policy fitted in with this imperial discourse on race; there are many references linked with this. Chapter Three ('The Commonwealth Ideal and the Problem of Racial Segregation') and Four ('The Widening Critique of Empire') are of more historical interest than the later chapters, 'Sociology, anthropology and race' and 'The Half-caste pathology'. The themes in the 'Widening Critique of Empire' have already been subjected to historical enquiry—the author's own contribution brings to light the critique by those to the left of the official labour movement, people like George Padmore, C.L.R. James and Harold Moody.

The penultimate chapter ('Colonial development, war and black immigration') has made an original contribution to knowledge. This is the only place where I have come across a documented account of the ideological context of Lord Hailey's *African Survey*. Liberal critics of British colonial policy like W.M. Macmillan were passed over in favour of Malcolm Hailey, who had been in the I.C.S. 'One of the central objectives behind the survey was the promotion of a common pattern of Western control over the separate African territories, as had been produced in the Indian Raj. The imperialist intelligentsia of the *Round Table* journal shifted their model to that of the Indian Raj as a 'cohesive and unitary model of administration over an agrarian society' (p. 147).

There are a few copy-editing errors, surprising for a publisher like the CUP. One that must be pointed out is in footnote 27 on p. 211, where Ronald Robinson has been attributed the authorship of *Decline, Recovery and Fall of the British Empire* (Cambridge 1981) when it was John Gallagher.

Partha Sarathi Gupta
Department of History
University of Delhi

AMARTYA SEN *Commodities and Capabilities*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, 89 pp., Rs. 60.

AMARTYA SEN with contributions from J. Muellbauer, R. Kanbur, K. Hart and B. Williams, ed., G. Hawthorn, *The Standard of Living*, The Tanner Lectures, Clare Hall, Cambridge, 1985, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, xiv + 125 pp.

Professor Sen has been exploring the *conceptual* underpinnings of the idea of the standard of living which, as he rightly says in his Tanner lectures, 'communicates with apparent ease but is full of contrasts, conflicts and even contradictions' (p. 1). The two monographs under review contain a fascinating discussion of the scope and content of the concept, the domain in which it can be specified and the problems that arise in its valuation. There is a broad overlap between the first four chapters of *Commodities and Capabilities* (CC for short) and the first of the two Tanner lectures (TL for short) where Sen distinguishes his approach from the conventional measures of the living standard, and between the remaining chapters of CC and the second of the TL, where the details regarding the content are discussed. The non-overlapping parts are the chapter on information and interpretation along with the empirical appendices in CC, and the comments of commentators and the editor in TL.

The basic proposition put forward by Sen is that the concept of the living standard involves an assessment of the quality of life that a person is able to lead. In this sense, the living standard is distinct from the conventional measures, namely, the bundle of goods and services that a person is able to possess (opulence), as also the utility (in its various interpretations) that a person is able to derive from the consumption of the bundle of goods and services. Sen argues that in the ultimate analysis, the quality of living depends on the autonomy and liberty that a person enjoys with reference to actions and decisions affecting his own living. Following from this reasoning the major point of departure in Sen's analysis lies in focusing attention, not on the observable commodity possessions or their characteristics (which are usually considered by economists) but on the 'functioning achievements' and 'capabilities' of the person. Functioning achievements are what commodities and services enable the person to achieve in life taking into account his or her personal features and characteristics. The focus thus gets shifted from the observable commodity possessions to the contributions they make to the person's life. Capabilities require one to go one step further and consider the freedom that is enjoyed by the person in choosing *ex ante* among alternative bundles of feasible functioning achievements. In this view, the person's *ex ante* capabilities or realised achievements in life are given a prominent position, whereas the commodities or characteristics assume the instrumental living standard, the concept still remains elusive, especially with reference to the specification of the functioning achievements and capabilities. Sen's contribution lies in bringing to the fore the person and the quality of life he or she leads in characterising the living standard, and making one aware of the limitations of the conventional measures of the living standard. An operational alternative to the conventional measures is still a distant goal.

Suresh Tendulkar

Delhi School of Economics

State policy, the market economy, and tribal decline: The Central Provinces, 1861–1920

David Baker

St Stephen's College
University of Delhi

Tribes in a region of central India came under British rule in 1818 following the defeat of the Marathas. This region, known from 1820 as the Sagar and Narmada territories, largely comprised the districts of Sagar, Damoh, Jabalpur, Mandla, Seoni, Narsimhapur, Hoshangabad and Betul in present-day Madhya Pradesh. As officials made the area part of the wider imperial economy, they met with increasing resistance from chiefs and malguzars as their policies threatened the latter's lands and status. Moneylenders also disturbed traditional landholders, unseating them in recompense for debt. Yet British forces defeated all opposition, and after a third revolt in 1857–58 governments in Britain and India imposed their economic and other policies on the region unchecked. They did so within the framework of the Central Provinces formed in 1861 from a union of the Sagar–Narmada territories and the territory of Nagpur confiscated several years before.

For tribals in the northern Central Provinces the outcome of government policy, particularly the attempt to impose a market economy, was little short of tragic. Between 1818–1920 they became deeply indebted, and lost much of their land to moneylenders turned malguzars. Others remained locked into traditional poverty. As a result many in the administration dismissed the tribal community, though some like W.V. Grigson, deputy commissioner of Mandla in the thirties, were more sympathetic. In a notable passage Grigson blamed tribal decline on the results of state policy and, by implication, the market economy developed by British administrators over previous decades:

Everywhere I go I find more and more evidence of the exploitation of aboriginals by malguzars, traders and others. This season I have been

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touring in the interior in many localities which probably had not been visited since settlement, and I find the general state of affairs appalling. There is almost complete anarchy in the villages; the alien *malguzar* does just what he likes. He makes a demand for grazing dues or payment for *nistar*, and when the villagers protest, he will compound with them, demanding a round sum like a hundred rupees. If they do not agree, he will impound their cattle, run cases against them in the civil courts, or even harass them with gangs of loafers hired in Mandla or Jubbulpore.... All the villages of Beohar Raghunath Singh's estate have complained to me about the way he oppresses them.¹

Much the same assessment applied to tribal areas in other districts as well. This essay examines tribal decline in the northern Central Provinces between 1861–1920, and assesses the role of state policies and the market system in that process.

II

First let us trace the history of tribals in the northern Central Provinces to 1861.² By then the wider tribal community comprised descendants of groups migrating into central India from the first millennium before Christ. Among these the Baigas and iron-working Agarias were probably the earliest settlers in the Son valley, though their origins are unknown. In the eighth century before Christ Munda tribes from the east climbed over the Maikal hills of eastern Mandla and Seoni to settle in the upper Son and Narmada valleys as the Kols. They later moved down the Narmada and up onto the Satpura plateau to call themselves Korkus. Meanwhile, to the east the Kols encountered the Baigas and Agarias, and reduced them to a lower place in the social order.

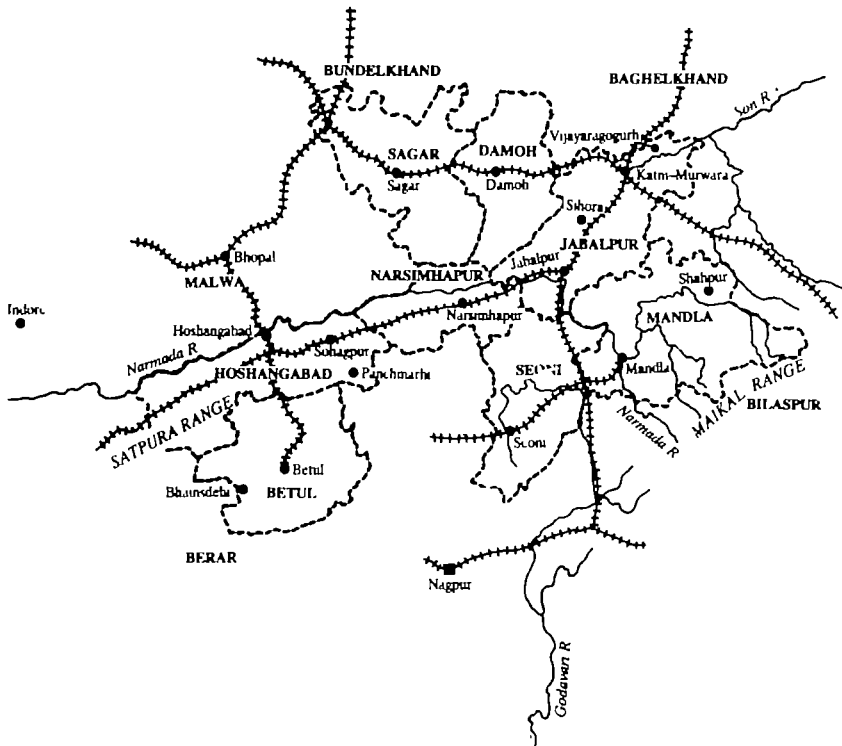
About three centuries after the Munda invasion other tribes entered the region. Of these the most important were the Dravidian Gonds who came from Karnataka up the Godavari and across the Maikal range. They, too, subdued the Baigas and Agarias, and separated the Kols from their Korku relatives further west. The Bhils were another tribe, though not Dravidian, which entered the region, probably from the west. Whatever their origins these tribes hunted and pastured animals, and fought for their existence against hostile foes.

Gradually the tribes formed elementary states. They did so to protect

¹ W.V. Grigson, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar*, Nagpur, 1944 (Grigson, CP), pp 97–98 *Nistar* rights were the rights to timber, grazing and forest produce cultivators enjoyed in the village wastes.

² This and the following paragraph owe much to A.K. Roy *et al*, *Planning the Environment*, Madurai, 1982, p. 2

THE NORTHERN CENTRAL PROVINCES



themselves against encroaching Aryan kingdoms to the north and Rajput or other invaders from whatever quarter. These states probably imitated other kingdoms with which the tribals themselves came in contact; and by about AD 1000 they possessed royal lineages and noble retinues with defensive forts, while their inhabitants practised small-scale agriculture and pasture and, where resources were insufficient, raided other tribal enclaves in the region.

The dominant royal lineage derived from tribal unions with invading chiefs. Gond ruling families especially intermarried with Rajput and other invaders, perhaps in defeat; but in so doing they perpetuated themselves and legitimised the invading chiefs at the same time. The resulting royal line was termed Raj-Gond, and by the fifteenth century it ruled in the four tribal states of central India. Two of these states lay within the region outlined above.

These were Kherla, centred on Betul; and Garha–Katangi, comprising Sagar, Damoh, Jabalpur, Mandla, the Narmada valley and part of the Satpura plateau. Two other states, Devgarh and Chandrapur, lay further south in present-day Maharashtra and are outside the scope of this study.

The decline of tribal fortunes, still evident in the twentieth century, began with the Mughals. In 1556 Asaf Khan, viceroy of Akbar, defeated Garha–Katangi and annexed it to the subah of Malwa. The Mughals also subdued Kherla, including it within the subah of Berar. These conquests opened central India to outside settlement; and the fitful immigration of the centuries up to 1500 gave way to a flood of outsiders, according to the British official, James Forsyth:

A vast development of the resources of these central regions followed the coming of Akber [*sic*]. A great highway between Upper India and the Deccan was established through a gap in the Satpura mountains. A vast city arose in the Tapti valley, which became the seat of government.... The open country, under the rule of Akber, was rapidly reclaimed by Hindu immigrants, arriving simultaneously from the north and west. Nor were they long in extending into the fat lands of the great valleys in the territories of the Gond princes. The reclamation of the heavy lands of the Narbada valley...had probably been entirely beyond the resources of the aboriginal races. The immigrants brought with them the necessary energy and...resources; and from this time a process commenced which resulted in the wholesale deprivation of the indigenous races of...the richest portions of their country, and the establishment therein of the arts of agriculture and commerce. The Gonds retired to the higher plateaux and slopes of the central hills.³

A similar outcome attended the waning of Mughal power. In the seventeenth century Garha fell to the Bundelkhand Rajputs of Orchha, and later to Chhattarsal, the Bundela raja of Panna; while Berar freed itself from Delhi to become one of the Bahmani kingdoms of the Deccan. Subsequently Marathas overran the tribal areas and included them in states based either on Sagar or Nagpur. In 1781 the raja of Sagar deposed the tribal ruler of Garha–Katangi (or Garha–Mandla as it was then known), and Jabalpur and Mandla fell under his sway. But Nagpur, too, sought these lands, and by 1800 it had seized most of Garha from Sagar. The states of Indore, Gwalior and Bhopal also tried to encroach on the region. But whatever the state, its rulers settled a largely Hindu population on the lands they conquered.

Between 1818–20 the Marathas of Sagar and Nagpur in turn gave way to the administration of the Sagar and Narmada territories, an agency of the

³ J. Forsyth, *The Highlands of Central India. Notes on their Forests and Wild Tribes, Natural History and Sports*, London, 1889, p. 11. The 'vast city' was Burhanpur

British government of India. From the outset officials introduced new land settlements, and sought to reduce the debts of tribal and Hindu notables and promote more efficient (as they saw it) management of land. Increasing interference with the lands and status of the chiefs drew them into disturbances against British rule. Each of these disturbances was more determined than its predecessor, and in each tribals participated on a large scale. On each occasion British forces defeated their opponents, enabling the colonial state to impose its policies more firmly on the region. In 1861 the government of India formed the Central Provinces. In this new unit of empire officials sought to tap agricultural and forest resources more fully within the framework of a market economy.

III

A further stage in tribal decline began with the formation of the Central Provinces. By 1861 the descendants of the one-time tribal invaders were settled in well-defined areas of the region under review. Tribal pockets remained in the plains, as in Narsimhapur and Hoshangabad; but generally tribals were concentrated in the plateau districts of Mandla, Seoni and Betul, and in the hill areas of other districts. This was so because over the centuries Hindu settlers had pushed tribal cultivators from the valleys to less fertile soils in the hills. Among tribals, Gonds predominated in Mandla, Seoni and Betul, though in fewer numbers than in Damoh and Jabalpur. Korkus belonged mostly to the western Satpuras, and were prominent in Hoshangabad and Betul; Kols resided mostly in Jabalpur. The Baigas were a small group domiciled in the Maikal hills. By 1911 these tribes with others formed part of a three and a half million strong population in the Central Provinces and Berar, of a total population of some 16 million people.⁴

Policy decisions widening the scope of the market economy in the Central Provinces were to affect tribals deeply. In 1854 the government of the North Western Provinces announced that it would bestow proprietary rights in land on the *malguzars* or revenue payers of the Sagar and Narmada territories, then a revenue division of the province. It did so to create a propertied 'middle class' that would invest its profits in farming and undertake cash cropping on a large scale. This proposal took shape in the land revenue settlements in all districts of the Central Provinces from 1861. Besides encouraging the development of agriculture, the administration established control over forests and developed road and rail communications to sell the region's wheat, cotton, other cash crops and timber in Indian and world markets.

⁴ *Census of 1921*, vol. X, *CP and Berar*, part I, *Report*, p. 148. These figures are for the Central Provinces, Berar and the princely states attached to the province.

To British officials between 1861–90 it seemed that the new directions in the Central Provinces fulfilled their aims of progress and prosperity. From the seventies merchants exported the first consignments of wheat to Britain and Europe, together with exports to the Indian market. These developments continued to the 1890s, and under the impact of this demand cultivation extended and prices rose, and the administration claimed that a wheat boom was bringing a new prosperity to the region.⁵ In fact wheat became the mainstay of the Central Provinces' economy, and the region's wheat revenues a key element in provincial finances.

Whether wheat boom or no, the settlement contributed to the further decline of the tribals in the northern Central Provinces. Some officials had hesitated to include them in the settlement, especially those in Mandla, on the grounds that

the District is generally speaking a large jungle with patches of cultivation in it, and sometimes of fine cultivated plains.... There has been no survey whatever, and there are very few Putwarees, and the few there are have enormous Talookas,...they can neither visit all their villages, nor correctly report the assets, capabilities, amount of cultivated, culturable or waste land(.) and this is not to be wondered at, when it is considered that the wild Gonds are constantly changing their patches of cultivation, and come and go from one estate, or ruin one another as fancy leads them.⁶

Officers also found Mandla in a neglected state, and in some places they had difficulty securing malguzars for villages. Nor could they predict the result of giving proprietary rights to 'classes unable to appreciate the gift'.⁷ Nonetheless the first chief commissioner, Richard Temple, included Mandla in the settlement to standardise the administration of revenue in the region and draw the district more firmly into the market system.

The administration's attempt to impose an alien economic and social system on the tribal community was an important element in its decline.⁸ British officials found it difficult to understand a people so diverse from them in social and economic life. As long as the region's economic system was not capitalist, officials saw tribals as harmless and industrious, hardy and daring.

⁵ See *Imperial Gazetteer*, vol. X, p. 77 (IG), *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement, Seoni*, 1867, p. 13 (RLRS), *RLRS Mandla*, 1869, p. 69.

⁶ Allahabad Post-Mutiny records, Saugor and Nerbudda Territories, Mandla, 7, 1861, W.C. Erskine to W.H. Lowe, 7 May 1861 (APMR, SNT).

⁷ CP Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce Dept., Land Revenue and Settlement, May 1872. Minute on the Mandla Settlement, G. Keatinge, 22 May 1872.

⁸ Mandla District Office records, 31, W.C. Erskine to DC Mandla, forwarding correspondence, including Erskine to Sadar Board of Revenue, North Western Provinces, 25 June 1856; Forsyth, *Highlands*, pp. 50, 99–100, *RLRS Jubbulpore*, 1867, p. 24 (Unless otherwise noted, a footnote at the beginning of a paragraph contains the sources for the entire paragraph)

But with the formation of a capitalist system of land-ownership and trade together with an incipient factory system, official attitudes towards them hardened. British officers found that tribals resisted change and assimilation into a capitalist-oriented society. They thus perceived them as 'wild, wandering, drunken...savages' having an 'innate apathy and vice'. The Jabalpur settlement report described tribals as among the 'rudest and ugliest specimens of humanity not to be found in any part of India'. Officials did not spare tribal chiefs either. The thakur of Pachmarhi was an 'opium-eater'; his dewan showed 'glibness of tongue'; and his retinue comprised but 'four or five tatterdemalion retainers'. The same conclusion would 'serve...well for the great majority of these petty semi-aboriginal chiefs'.

Tribals, where conscious, must have resented such attitudes, as they did the European penetration of their world. Some were merely 'astonished' by the presence of European officials in their territory.⁹ Others like the Baigas slipped from their villages as officials approached. Forsyth, that most travelled of officials in the early Central Provinces, encountered obstruction and hostility in building a government rest house in Pachmarhi, the forerunner of a sanatorium for officers in summer: 'Truth was, I saw the chief himself and his advisers hated our intrusion. With some truth they feared we were come to break up their much-beloved seclusion, and untrammelled barbarism; their rich harvest from the taxation of pilgrims to Mahadeo's shrine they thought was in danger; and they would have none of us.'¹⁰

Yet officials regarded such obstruction as rejection of development and progress.¹¹ Subsistence farming where 'lazy cultivators' lived 'from hand to mouth'...exhausting the soil' was opposed to farming for the market; and shifting cultivation was alien to British attempts to develop settled agriculture based on rights to property. Shifting cultivation, too, was fatal to forest conservation and to the marketing of forest produce. Even where the tribal settled to cultivate and had contact with the market, he still could not gain acceptance, but became 'mean, cringing, cowardly, and as great a liar as any other low class of Indian', congregating in 'filthy little villages, overrun by poultry and pigs, and innocent of all attempt at conservancy.'

The most widespread form of shifting cultivation among tribals was *dhya* practised by the Gonds. Under this system tribals cut and burnt trees and shrubs, and ploughed the ashes into the soil, thereby destroying forests below the frost line. They held the land in common. Chiefs or elders lived in stable villages with Hindu traders, but tribal cultivators generally lived in

⁹ Forsyth, *Highlands*, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

¹¹ APMR, SNT, 1848-61, Mandla, 1858-61, 1, Commr Jubbulpore to W. Muir, 29 September 1858; RLRS Mandla, 1869, pp. 32, 132; Forsyth, *Highlands*, p. 373, P. McDowney, 'Colonial administration and social developments in middle India the Central Provinces, 1861-1921,' Ph D thesis, University of Virginia, 1980, pp 441-443

shifting hamlets with sufficient reserves of forest for periodic cutting and cultivation. The Gonds used cattle and the plough to grow light millets for subsistence, but this deteriorated the soil necessitating frequent changes of land. Some Gonds practised settled agriculture in Jabalpur and Mandla, where they were better off, and grew wheat and rice after the manner of Hindu cultivators.

Korku agriculture was more basic than that of the Gonds. They used neither cattle nor plough, and had no implement but the axe. They selected a hill side, cutting bushes and ringbarking larger trees to induce death. The Korkus then burnt the forest, raked the ashes over and waited for rain. They sowed the seed by hand, using ash as fertiliser, and fenced the crop after germination to protect it against damage by wild animals.

In every district officials sought to end shifting cultivation and force tribals into the *malguzari* settlement. They did so to maximise revenues from agriculture and the forests, and bring tribals within the scope of the market. In this they were generally successful. In the sixties Gonds were prominent among *malguzars* in the hills and jungles of Damoh, Jabalpur, Mandla, Seoni, Narsimhapur and Hoshangabad, while Korkus were strongly represented among *malguzars* in Betul.

Officials dealt separately with the Baigas of Mandla.¹² A small tribe, Hindu villagers acknowledged them as the original inhabitants of the area and superior among tribal communities. They served the Gonds as priests; and villagers respected their decisions in boundary disputes. British officials also developed some respect for the Baigas, describing sections of them as fearless, trustworthy and independent, managing their communities in a praiseworthy manner.

The agricultural methods of the Baigas resembled Gond practice to some extent. They lived in villages that were often hard to find, comprising an area where they practised shifting cultivation and hunted. In farming the Baigas used the axe to clear *bewar* or areas of forest, and in some places they ring-barked and killed trees to get resin. They later burnt the trees and spread the ashes to provide fertiliser and prevent frost, for much of their cultivation was in forests of bamboo above the frost line.

In other respects *bewar* cultivation differed sharply from the *dhya* of the Gonds. The Baigas considered themselves above the latter because they did not use the plough but cut vegetation with the axe and sowed their crops by hand. They believed that these methods allowed the soil to retain its body and the forest to regenerate. The Baigas estimated that about seven years after cultivation the timber on a *bewar* or plot would have grown sufficiently to permit the agricultural cycle to begin again. McEldowney, a historian, claimed that the Baigas saw their role

¹² Material on the Baigas is drawn immediately from McEldowney. For a further treatment see V. Elwin, *The Baiga*, London, 1939

as guardians of the forest and the soil....The Baiga tribe had developed a close relationship with the highland forest environment...in which they lived. Their ideology, represented in their myths, gave them a proud and separate identity. It provided the basis for living in an often dangerous, hostile and precarious forest environment through the cultivation of *bewar*, hunting and food gathering....They...could survive if they maintained, conserved, and revived the forest and honoured the fertile soil or Dhartia Mata who gave them life.¹³

On the eve of settlement the Baigas' connection with the market was minimal. This must have been the case with other tribes as well, particularly those living in remote areas. Writing of the Baigas of Ramgarh in Mandla in the 1860s, an official noted that

The ignorance of the Byga as to the value of money, and of the forest produce which he disposes of in barter in exchange for the few articles he requires from the outer world is striking.... One, or at the most two or three visits to the nearest bazar per annum suffice to provide for these; and during the remainder of the year the Byga community is, as it were, cut off from the rest of mankind...quite satisfied with bread made of kodon or kootkee flour, and occasionally a little spirits....They are very expert in all the appliances of the chase....Few animals...escape them.¹⁴

To improve the Baigas as well as to harness the forests to the market, the administration tried to force them into settled agriculture and the *malguzari* system.¹⁵ Settlement officers in Mandla condemned *bewar* as destructive, and so justified the seizure of Baiga land for 'conservation, taxation and colonisation'. In 1868 officers closed forest reserves and other property to *bewar* but, unable to force the Baigas to take to settled cultivation, confined them to an area of about 8,000 acres. Here they tried to persuade them to adopt the plough, but with little success. In 1878 officers banned *bewar* altogether and began settling the Baigas in Gond villages. Between 1879–84 the administration settled about 127 families in such villages, providing them with cattle, implements and seed, and paying their outstanding debts. But this policy, too, failed as many Baigas fled to nearby tribal states or zamindaris. Those remaining clung to their old ways, or worked as labourers in their beloved forests.

¹³ McEldowney, 'Colonial administration', pp. 412, 432.

¹⁴ *RLRS Mandla, 1869*, pp. 35–37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 161–162; McEldowney, 'Colonial administration', pp. 441–464; W H. Wake, 'The relations between transportation improvements and agricultural changes in Madhya Pradesh, India, 1854–1954', Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1961. pp. 128–129.

The settlement of the 1860s which aimed to improve and involve the tribes in a market economy dislocated the wider tribal community as well. Gonds and Korkus were fully involved in the settlement as taluqdars or chiefs (by then on an almost equal footing with malguzars), as malguzars, and tenant cultivators. Yet in each district indebtedness intensified at all levels as moneylenders tempted tribals with easy loans. They could do so because assessments in some districts were inaccurate, that in Narsimhapur grossly exaggerating the fertility of the soil. They could do so also because for thirty years from the 1860s officials coerced malguzars and peasants to pay their revenues despite frequently adverse weather and crop conditions. Indeed up to 1890 the administration had no procedure for suspending or remitting revenue, and with the compliance of the central government refused to admit the existence of scarcity or famine, though both occurred in each decade in various districts. Again the much vaunted agricultural expansion took place onto poorer soils that could not sustain the permanent cultivation of wheat—the preferred cash crop of officials. Nor could productivity increase as plough cattle declined to 1890; or while tribal and other peasants continued to use traditional methods of farming.

As for indebtedness, in Sagar by 1891 small Gond tenants and labourers had 'few resources and little or no credit'.¹⁶ Three quarters of Gond landholders in Jabalpur were indebted by 1883. In Mandla indebtedness was most marked among tribals owing to bad seasons and dependence on drink. Forsyth observed that Gonds in the Mandla lowlands were nearly all 'hopelessly indebted' to moneylenders who speculated in their produce. In the early seventies officials reported that indebtedness was growing among tribal chiefs and malguzars in Narsimhapur and Hoshangabad, the former presenting the worst cases of debt.

Like the agricultural population generally, tribal chiefs, malguzars and peasants forfeited land in settlement of debt.¹⁷ Enquiries in Jabalpur in 1886 disclosed that Gonds had lost property due to their simplicity and 'overreaching'. In Mandla transfers of tribal villages between 1868–88 were 'strikingly numerous', particularly in the north and east of the district. Tribal malguzars in Seoni and Betul were also surrendering their villages on account of debt. In Narsimhapur nomadic Gonds were so little attached to the soil that even the 'most liberal terms failed to hold them'. A Quaker missionary in Hoshangabad in the nineties 'quickly discovered how grave

¹⁶ *CP Administration Report, 1872–73*, p. 54; *Land Revenue Administration Report, 1883–84*, p. 21 (*LRA Report*), *RLRS Saugor, 1887–97*, p. 39; Wake, 'Relations', pp. 96–97, 153; I. Singh, *Gondwana and the Gonds*, Lucknow, 1944, p. 164.

¹⁷ *RLRS Narsinghpur, 1866*, p. 75, *LRA Report, 1883–84*, p. 21, *RLRS Jubbulpore, 1886–94*, pp. 3, 25, *RLRS Mandla, 1888–90*, J. B. Fuller to Sec CC, 8 February 1893; *RLRS Hoshangabad, 1891–98*, p. 36; I. Singh, *Gondwana*, p. 164; P. Harnetty, 'Changes in the agrarian structure of the Central Provinces of India, 1861–1920', *Proceedings of the 7th International Association of the Historians of Asia*, Bangkok, 1979, vol. 1, p. 439.

were the injustices to which tribal society was exposed. Unscrupulous moneylenders tempted the simple people into debt, and then used the alien processes of British law to seize their lands, in cynical disregard of tribal custom and traditional rights.¹⁸ As a result aboriginal chiefs and malguzars in Hoshangabad were slowly losing their estates. In Jabalpur, Mandla and other districts tribals among absolute occupancy and other tenants similarly surrendered their lands for debt.

It was the absentee moneylender who generally took over tribal land, becoming a malguzar in the process.¹⁹ Gonds in Jabalpur lost property to banias. In Mandla the Kallar liquor vendors came into possession of 145 of the 270 Gond villages acquired by moneylenders by 1890. From the sixties banias began to acquire villages in Narsimhapur, displacing the smaller Gond proprietors. In Hoshangabad banias acquired 'really valuable villages' from Gond proprietors by advancing small sums which they allowed to accumulate at 'exorbitant interest'. Moreover, the tendency to amass estates was seen to greatest effect among the moneylending owners of former tribal land.

Drink was closely interwoven with tribal debt and land transfer.²⁰ In places malguzars and cultivators depended on travelling traders for the sale of surplus crops, timber, bamboo and grass. In some cases dealers in spirits combined their trade with dealings in grain and other produce, to telling effect. Reports from Seoni, Hoshangabad and Betul spoke of heavy drinking among tribals, and its responsibility for their failure, debt, or loss of land. Fuller underlined this in 1892 with reference to Mandla:

The general cause of debt is extravagant expenditure on drink, and a large number of the transferred villages have come into the hands of a professional liquor making class (Kallars)...I have come across Gond villages stupefied to a man with the effects of a previous night's debauch. There is not a report dealing with the condition of the Gonds which does not lay stress on the ruin which drink is bringing them.²¹

Although the administration tried to control the liquor trade, it could not restore the morale or lands of the Gonds. It passed an excise law withdrawing from tribals the power to establish stills and manage shops, and

¹⁸ M. Sykes, *Quakers in India a Forgotten Century*, London, 1980, p. 71

¹⁹ *RLRS Jubbulpore, 1886-94*, pp. 3, 25; *RLRS Hoshangabad, 1891-98*, p. 36; *Central Provinces District Gazetteers*, Narsimhapur, p. 59 (CPDG); Harnetty, 'Agrarian changes', p. 450; I. Singh, *Gondwana*, p. 164

²⁰ *RLRS Betul, 1866*, pp. 41-42; *RLRS Hoshangabad, 1891-98*, p. 40; *RLRS Seoni, 1894-98*, p. 28; CPDG, Betul, p. 74.

²¹ J.B. Fuller, *A Review of the Progress of the CP during the past 30 years, and of the Present and Past Condition of the People*, Nagpur, 1892, p. 29

auctioned liquor licences instead. Forsyth claimed that competition for these licences among Kallar liquor vendors forced up the price of liquor, so that drinking declined and some Kallars were ruined.²² But however reliable these reports, the demand for liquor among tribals persisted.

Under conditions of desperate poverty and degradation many tribals turned to crime.²³ In 1862–63 one of the main sources of crime in the Central Provinces was the 'wild tribes' of the Satpuras. Several years later Gonds in Seoni were operating as 'professional dacoits' on the southern face of the ghats. Gonds led most dacoities in Betul in 1866. 'Inoffensive Gonds' joined the ranks of criminals in Jabalpur during the intense famine of 1869. Another report the same year awarded them 'first place' in crime among the agricultural community of the province. Tribals in prison in Sagar and Jabalpur in 1874 far outstripped Hindus in terms of their percentage of the total population. By 1881 government officers were still whipping Gonds and Baigas convicted of petty theft in Mandla and Seoni. During the eighties, too, gangs of Bhils escaped from Jabalpur jail and kept up a career of dacoity until their leader, Tantia, was shot in 1890. Korkus also assisted Tantia in his exploits in the Bori forest of Hoshangabad district in 1883–84.

In keeping with the social and economic changes described above, traditional tribal culture continued to weaken.²⁴ Centuries before, the Raj-Gond rulers had adopted Hinduism and invited Brahmans to their kingdoms to act as priests and legitimise their rule. These men and the migrants that followed implanted Hindu legends in their new homeland and brought tribal holy places under Hindu influence. British rule further diminished the hold of tribal religion and culture. In the nineteenth century tribal control over fields and forests weakened, and tribals moved closer to Hindu towns and villages, such that when Forsyth toured hill areas in the sixties he found the aboriginal tribes permeated 'with Hindu ideas, manners, and religion', though Gond deities held sway in places. Several decades later the census report claimed that tribals had:

A very general desire to be regarded as of the Hindu religion.... The aspiration of the hill races towards Hinduism, despite Hindu contempt, is significant of their general disposition to adopt the Hindu lead.... The superior number, civilisation, and success of the Hindus so impress the minds of the aboriginals that they voluntarily adopt their manners and customs.²⁵

²² Forsyth, *Highlands*, pp 165–166.

²³ *Admin Report*, 1862–63, p 28; *Police Report*, 1864, p. 44, *Criminal Justice Report*, 1869, p 2, *Police Report*, 1869, pp. 39–40; *Jails Report*, 1874, p. 2, *Criminal Justice Report*, 1881, p. 25, *Admin Report*, 1883–84, p vi; J A. Duke, *Criminal Tribes active in the CP and Berar*. Nagpur, 1935, p. 7, Forsyth, *Highlands*, pp. 164–165.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 142–147, 171

²⁵ *Census of 1881*, vol. II, *CP. Report*, p. 47.

The tribals' use of Hindi also signified a decline of their traditional culture.

IV

The forest policy of the Central Provinces administration intensified the problems faced by tribals during the first land settlement.²⁶ The forests of what the Mughals termed Gondwana covered a vast area, which early civil servants 'never dreamt of penetrating'. Even by 1853 the jungles remained largely unexplored. Until 1845 district officers permitted cutters to fell valuable timber more or less indiscriminately, but in that year the agent, W.H. Sleeman, forbade cutting without a permit on the grounds that all land belonged to the government. Several years later the authorities sought to bring forests in Sagar, Seoni and other districts under closer supervision in order to exploit their resources more effectively.

A clearer policy on forests emerged when the region rejoined the North Western Provinces in 1852. In 1850 G.A. Bushby, then agent, forbade fellers to extract timber as he claimed that the government-owned the land. Two years later as commissioner he appointed the region's first conservator of woods and forests. While excluding forest land from the ensuing settlement, in 1854 the government of the North Western Provinces proclaimed that 'the Government reserves to itself the right to all large forests where valuable timber exists.... Where large tracts of lands either forests or uncultivated exist, the Government also reserves a right to dispose of such as it may think proper.'²⁷ In keeping with this announcement the commissioner, W.C. Erskine, ordered officials in forest districts such as Mandla to stop giving permits for cutting and to hand over the teak and other forests to the officer appointed. From 1854, too, the provincial government was ready to demarcate and reserve areas of forest, preparatory to utilising their resources for its own profit.

Forests and wastelands similarly formed a key resource from which the administration of the Central Provinces sought large revenues between 1861-90. These areas comprised village wastes, wasteland reserved for cultivation, and forests proper. For village wastes, the settlement officer demarcated an area adjacent to villages and gave them to the malguzars for the use of the villagers. Rules governing the use of these areas allowed proprietors to cut all trees except teak, sal, sheesham and other valuable species, and trees below a certain size. They also obliged the malguzar to allow villagers to extract wood and graze cattle there without charge.

²⁶ Forsyth, *Highlands*, p. 16, APMR, SNT, Jubbulpore, 67, 1859-60, Sec Rev Board to Sec Govt NWP, 24 February 1860

²⁷ *Ibid.*

A second category of wasteland lay outside village boundaries, and comprised the uncultivated wastes in hilly areas opened for cultivation by Richard Temple, the first chief commissioner. Temple's policy failed, as most cultivators were too poor to buy such land, and foreign purchasers were not interested. Thus when Temple left the Central Provinces, a later chief commissioner, G.H. Keatinge, prohibited their sale. In 1879 the administration merged them with the reserved forests; and from 1883 no cultivator could lease wastes in any district except Mandla and Hoshangabad.

The third and largest block of waste or forest land comprised the government forests. As noted above the government established its claim to the forests of the region between 1845–60. In 1860 Captain G.F. Pearson became the first superintendent of forests in the Sagar and Narmada territories, and district officers were instructed to conserve forests by reducing cutting. Forest management developed only with the formation of the Central Provinces in 1861, when Pearson became the provincial conservator of forests. Over the next few years officers explored forests in the Satpuras and elsewhere, but were dismayed to find them ravaged by dealers selling timber in the towns, with contractors cutting sleepers for the railways and other public works adding to the destruction. Tribals had also damaged the forests, the best ground for shifting cultivation being 'where the finest... trees like to grow'.²⁸ Officials conveyed their shock at the forests' state thus:

There is nothing left now in the Baitool forests except saplings, short and damaged timber....the large sleeper contractors...have had permission to fell in certain districts of wide extent, whatever trees they pleased, provided they were below three feet in girth.... No condition could be more liberal...(yet) the trees have been cut up in a most wasteful manner.... It cannot be said that the Forest Officers have been unmindful of the interests of the Railway and Public Departments (Works). Going through the Forests and seeing the greater portion, and in some instances, all large trees felled to meet these requirements, one is rather inclined to doubt whether the interests of Forests and future demands of the Country....have been guarded with sufficient care and jealousy.²⁹

In 1862 Pearson framed rules for administering the region's forests. The new conservator was a romantic who loved the 'wild woodland and ever varying scenery', and the keynote of his policies was conservation, the price he believed the administration must pay if it was to harvest the resources of the forests on a permanent basis.³⁰ His rules restricted the felling of

²⁸ *Admin Report, 1862–63*, Section XII

²⁹ Nagpur Residency and Secretariat records, Rev, 86, 1863, Dr Brandis to Sec CC, 7 October 1863 (NRSR).

³⁰ *Ibid*, *Forest Administration Report, 1868–69*, p. 5; NRSR, Rev, 5, 1868, G F Pearson to Sec CC, 3 February 1868.

valuable timber, but allowed contractors to extract other species on payment of fees. Pearson's rules included guidelines for managing protected or reserved forests and for restricting shifting cultivation. They also gave cultivators access to plantations set apart for the purpose.

From 1865 the administration put Pearson's policies onto a more permanent footing. In that year Charles Bernard as chief commissioner added the wastelands to government forests and applied the Forest Act to the province, superseding all previous legislation. In 1865, too, the administration divided forests into reserved and unreserved sections, with the forest department managing the former and deputy commissioners the latter. Under the Act the administration prohibited cutting, grazing and shifting cultivation in the reserved forests, but gave the district officer control over the extraction of timber from the forests in his charge. The Act also permitted rural communities living near forests to remove unreserved timber and other produce for their own use.

Under these arrangements the management of the forests made steady progress. The main work of the forest department comprised the demarcation and management of reserved forests. Decisions relating to the Bori forest in Hoshangabad illustrate how this was done. Officials confiscated the forest from a landowner for joining the revolt of 1857, and in 1862 it came under the management of the department. The administration declared Bori a reserved forest in 1865, and a forest officer appointed four years later demarcated its boundaries and established a teak plantation. In 1878 the administration enlarged the forest, but made no fellings until 1889. Officials dealt similarly with the forests in Murwara, formerly Vijayaraggarh, in Jabalpur, which were also confiscated after the revolt.

Up to 1890 the administration steadily enlarged its control over forests in the region. In 1872 the chief commissioner brought unreserved forests under the forest department, and from then on the administration opposed the alienation of forest land for cultivation or other purposes. It subsequently declared the unreserved forests as reserved under the Forest Act of 1878, but leased these areas for cutting other than the prohibited species. This Act also legalised the system whereby the holder of a timber licence could cut trees in specified areas. In the following decade the administration finally transferred control of the former unreserved forests to the forest department from deputy commissioners.

Besides defining policy the administration developed a framework for forest management. In 1862 it constituted forests in Sagar, Damoh, Jabalpur and South Mandla into the northern forest division of the Central Provinces, and in 1864 those in the Narmada valley and Betul into the western division. Forests in Betul and Damoh formed separate divisions in 1878. The administration brought forests in Narsimhapur under the department in 1866, administering them with forests in Hoshangabad, but in 1889 it placed

them under separate management. By 1894-95 Jabalpur formed a forest division of its own also.

Mandla best exhibited the effect of the administration's policies on tribals. As we have seen, the former had once practised shifting cultivation on a wide scale, making extensive inroads into the forests. Surveys in the sixties created an opinion against such cultivation, and the administration began employing tribals in forests and on the roads to wean them from the practice. Some officials wanted to expel tribals from forests and wastelands entirely, but the settlement of 1868-69 evolved a compromise by including large waste areas within village boundaries thus enabling tribal cultivators to take up plots in regular rotation. After they had exhausted the soil on one side of the plot, they could cut and cultivate the other side and allow the forest to regenerate. While the administration sought to confine tribals to *malguzari* villages, it also excluded them from the forests. Settlement officers similarly forbade *Baigas* from cultivating in the forests, and sought to confine them to certain localities. These decisions harmed tribals socially and economically, and hastened their decline. They also formed a prelude to the events of 1891-1901, which we shall now examine.

V

Tribal decline reached new depths between 1891-1901, the first decade of the revised revenue settlement, and again government policies were largely responsible. In 1887 the administration of the Central Provinces announced that it intended to revise the settlement to harvest the wealth generated since 1861. To this end J.B. Fuller, director of agriculture, and the chief commissioner, Sir Hector Mackenzie, sanctioned a new soil-unit system which the former claimed accurately estimated the rent payable by each farmer.³¹ In addition, Fuller and Mackenzie pushed the administration's share of the revenue from 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the net assets, rising to 65 per cent in some cases; and reduced the settlement term from 30 to 20 years. The administration also raised the valuation of *malguzars'* home farms, and tapped sources of rural wealth not previously assessed.

Despite cuts made by subsequent chief commissioners, district revenues expanded dramatically.³² In Hoshangabad they increased by a spectacular 78 per cent to compensate the administration for its alleged loss of revenue under the first settlement. The revenues of the two poorer districts, Mandla and Seoni, rose by 77 per cent as officials pressed them for greater returns following expanded cultivation up to 1890. In Jabalpur revenues grew by 65 per cent; and in Damoh by 58 per cent. In Narsimhapur, Sagar and Betul they expanded substantially by 49 per cent, 48 per cent, and 46 per cent,

³¹ *RLRS Jubbulpore, 1886-94*, p. 30

³² These figures are taken from the *RLRS* of the 1890s

respectively. The settlements in Sagar and Seoni provided for a progressive increase to enable malguzars to pay their enhanced dues with ease.

As part of its aim to boost returns the administration also intensified its grip on forests and wastes, further excluding the tribal community. It sought first to conserve the forests forming part of the village area, restricting the felling of timber on 'unculturable' land or land not required for immediate cultivation. In so doing the administration tried to prevent malguzars from clearing trees on the grounds that village wastes were more useful forested than bare, and that to denude them would adversely affect the climate as well as hinder regrowth.

More importantly from a financial point of view, the administration applied further regulations to government forests. Before 1893 cutters felled timber under licence, but the fellings were unregulated: high stools of forest remained in some places, while in others heavy cutting made reproduction difficult. In 1893 the administration closed government forests to tribal and other cultivators, and introduced the policy of working plans. Though reducing the area to be worked at any one time, the plans provided for rotating forest coupes where timber would be cut for the market. After felling, the plans closed coupes for ten years to allow for regrowth, culling and planting. Thus within the period of a plan, forests in a particular division would be worked and closed systematically, and their resources utilised and conserved at the same time. This procedure envisaged a continuous revenue, and though a plan might cause revenue to fall in the short term, in the long run it ensured that the administration would earn substantial profits from forests. Officials were also to issue licences for grazing, while contractors could purchase leases for the collection of forest products such as honey, lac, gum and mahua. In tracts near villages peasants could pay a fixed sum for their annual supply of fuel and timber.

Despite official optimism, the decade from 1891 developed into a severe crisis in which tribals suffered greatly. For 30 years the administration had refused to moderate the land revenue, coercing full collections irrespective of seasons or crops. For 30 years, too, moneylenders had exploited the need of malguzars and peasants to pay their dues and maintain cultivation at times of difficulty. Consequently by 1890 indebtedness had intensified, and many malguzars and peasants had lost their land. At the same time the lure of the market impelled farmers to extend wheat cultivation in the rabi to unsuitable soils, and the subsequent slide from rabi to kharif cropping showed how unstable the expansion was. Even the much vaunted grain trade to Britain and Europe was short-lived and subject to fluctuating demand and prices. Given the above, the region's agriculturists, tribals among them, entered resettlement with a severe handicap, which events turned into a major crisis.

Superficially the crisis in the northern Central Provinces comprised a

prolonged failure of crops due to poor weather conditions between 1891–1901. Yet as crops failed rural capital contracted, the land revenue plummeted, revenue balances rose alarmingly, and the new settlements in all districts became unworkable. A commercial crisis overlaid these difficulties. In the early nineties wheat exports to Britain and Europe collapsed, largely due to inferior grain, and the region's economy was undermined. Though the administration exported what it could, it had to import large quantities of grain, thereby reversing the provincial terms of trade. At the same time prices rose making the purchase of food difficult, especially for those without land or the resources to tide them over the crisis. As a result in all districts large numbers suffered from scarcity and famine several times during the decade.

The crisis and attendant famine wrought havoc among tribals who formed a large section of rural society in the region. Official optimism apart, by 1891 the tribals' economic position had deteriorated since the first settlement, and they had been effectively barred from the forests. They were consequently in no position to withstand Fuller's resettlement, much less the rigours of the famine decade.

Tribals exhibited a mixed pattern of agricultural practice by 1891.³³ The most important development over the previous 30 years had been the transfer of shifting cultivation from the forests to *malguzari* villages. This was the pattern in the hill villages of Jabalpur division, though here and there in the plains tribals engaged in settled agriculture. In Sagar, too, the Gonds generally inhabited tracts of jungle fringing the district, where most were small tenants and labourers 'with few resources and little or no credit'. Gonds likewise inhabited the hilly parts of Damoh, where they practised 'indifferent' agriculture. Some Gonds dwelt in or near jungles in Jabalpur, growing kodon and kutki, though in east Jabalpur they grew crops on small holdings. But irrespective of location they were poor, cultivating with insufficient implements and hired bullocks, and paying produce rents or at a rate per plough. Other Gonds worked as labourers in the wheat lands of the *haveli* to supplement their income from shifting cultivation elsewhere.

Even so the Gonds of Jabalpur were much 'better off than their fellows of the Satpura districts'. In some parts of Mandla they comprised poor labourers, in others a 'roving and unsettled peasantry'. Most Gonds in Seoni farmed the poorer soils of the hills, supplementing their incomes by working in the plains. Numbers were also found in the more populous parts of the district, where they had taken to settled cultivation, but they too were poor.

The pattern of tribal agriculture was much the same in the Narmada division. Where possible the hill tribes of Narsimhapur clung to shifting cultivation, resisting efforts to force them into settled agriculture. Indebted

³³ For this and the following paragraph see *RLRS Damoh, 1886*, p. 48, *RLRS Jabulpore, 1886–94*, pp. 3, 21–23, *RLRS Saugar, 1887–97*, p. 39, *RLRS Seoni, 1894–98*, p. 28; *RLRS Mandla, 1904–10*, p. 3; *CPDG, Mandla*, p. 70

Gonds and Korkus held settled villages in the hills of Hoshangabad, though their position in the district at large typified that of tribals throughout the region:

The more energetic Hindu has ousted them from all the good land in the valley....The Gonds of the plains...have mostly sunk to the position of field labourers.... They include a large number who are not cultivating tenants, but are recorded as such because the patch of ground attached to their houses has been entered as a holding. In the jungle villages they still form the bulk of the cultivators, but in the plains the number of real cultivators...is small. Those that regularly cultivate generally have small holdings. They form the poorest section of the agricultural community.³⁴

Tribals in Betul still lived where they had in the sixties, though officials claimed that banning shifting cultivation in the forests had improved their lot.³⁵

The Baigas' position worsened during the decade. From 1890 administrators made a final effort to force them into settled agriculture and, if possible, the market economy.³⁶ To contain them officials carved out a tract of hill country in Dindori tahsil, an inaccessible area in eastern Mandla, describing the area as a *chak* or reservation. Outside the *chak*, *bewar* was forbidden. Inside officials tolerated it, but showed their abhorrence of the practice by taxing the axes of the Baiga community. Baigas in the *chak* were under the oversight of the forest department, which tried vigorously to persuade them to use the plough, besides agreeing to find work in the forests for all who wanted it. To induce Baigas to enter the *chak* the administration agreed not to levy rent on leased plots for three years, and to give interest-free loans to buy cattle and seed for seven years.

The Baigas' experience of the *chak* was unfortunate. The areas where they could practise *bewar* were either too small or unsatisfactory, and officials were slow to honour their promises of aid. The experiment was already a failure by 1893 when Fuller toured Mandla and saw the Baigas living in destitution.³⁷ He wisely concluded that the administration could not force them to use the plough, and in 1895 officials retreated from their policies. Finding that the Baigas were not entering the *chak* in sufficient numbers, they permitted Gond and other plough cultivators to settle there. This made the Baigas even more insecure, and their numbers in the *chak*

³⁴ *RLRS Hoshangabad, 1891-98*, p. 40

³⁵ *RLRS Betul, 1894-99*, p. 74.

³⁶ For this and the two following paragraphs see *CPDG*, Mandla, p. 233; McEldowney, 'Colonial administration', pp. 465-471.

³⁷ In contrast to his harsh revenue and settlement policies, Fuller sympathised with the plight of the Baigas, and even supported their system of *bewar*. See Elwin, *The Baiga*, pp. 128-129

continued to fall. By 1901 less than half of those who entered the reservation earlier in the decade remained.

Outside the *chak* the Baigas' prospects were equally bleak. Those who wished to retain their traditional ways migrated to the Pandaria zamindari in Bilaspur where 'indiscriminate *bewar*' was allowed. The administration dissuaded the Baigas of Mandla tahsil from settling in the *chak*, maintaining that it was in their interests to remain in their malguzari villages. Where Baigas shifted to such villages, officials encouraged malguzars to induct them into plough cultivation by giving revenue concessions and publicly acknowledging their help. But in these villages officials banned *bewar*, prohibited the cutting of trees, and provided no money to Baigas to buy seeds, bullocks or ploughs. For these Baigas, too, employment in forest villages was entirely lacking.

Indebtedness compounded the hapless state of most tribals, whatever their background.³⁸ As many tribals were indebted by 1891, the enhanced revenues and rents of the second settlement only magnified the problem. Most chiefs in Narsimhapur and Hoshangabad were indebted. And though the administration tried to place indebted estates in these and other districts on a sound footing, debts were frequently so heavy that such measures helped little. Gond malguzars suffered at the hands of their creditors in Damoh, as they did in Jabalpur. Heavy debt prevailed among tribal malguzars in Mandla. In the nineties Gond and Korku malguzars in Hoshangabad were indebted on a larger scale than ever before, though they continued to own villages. In Hoshangabad, too, tribal tenants suffered from debt. As one official described the lot of the district's tribal cultivators:

They form the poorest section of the agricultural community...; they almost invariably borrow their seed-grain and advances for food from the village moneylender, who takes almost the whole of their crops. They are a careless, improvident people content to live from hand to mouth with little thought for the morrow. They seem by constitution unable to adapt themselves to the changed circumstances under which they now live.³⁹

The position of tribal labourers in Hoshangabad, as everywhere, bordered on the desperate.

As before, indebtedness led tribal chiefs, malguzars and cultivators to

³⁸ *RLRS Jubbulpore, 1886-94*, p. 3; *RLRS Mandla, 1888-90*, J. B. Fuller to CC, 8 February 1893; *RLRS Hoshangabad, 1891-98*, pp. 35-36, 40; *CPDG, Damoh*, p. 55; *CPDG, Narsinghpur*, p. 84; R. V. Russell and Hira Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of the CP of India*, London, 1916, Vol. III, p. 139, Wake, 'Relations', p. 153.

³⁹ *RLRS Hoshangabad, 1891-98*, p. 40.

transfer land on a large scale to moneylenders from the towns.⁴⁰ Powerless to stop this transfer, officials blamed unscrupulous banias for tempting tribal innocents into debt and seizing their lands. In Damoh the smaller proprietors gave place to moneylenders in 'large numbers', the Kallar trader, Seth Dalchand, taking over many villages. Dalchand and other Kallars and Marwaris took advantage of Gond proprietors in Mandla also, using any means to obtain their land. Tribals in Seoni seemed unable to retain good land, and their fields likewise passed to those to whom they were indebted. By the turn of the century smaller tribal landowners in Narsimhapur had 'practically all been ousted'. In Hoshangabad also officials noted with unease that banias were ousting Gond and Korku proprietors and pushing tenants from cultivation into labour. The same process was at work among the old aboriginal rulers of the district. In Betul banias 'snapped up' jungle villages inhabited by tribals, whom officials described as 'submissive...and easily frightened'.

The earlier connection between moneylenders, tribal debt and drink persisted during the nineties.⁴¹ Where tribal malguzars and cultivators sold their crops or utilised their profits to obtain drink, they had nothing to fall back on except further loans from the moneylender. Officials claimed that tribals as a class were grossly addicted to drink, and that even during famine starving Gonds bartered grain for drink. They were also aware that liquor sellers in Mandla were acquiring aboriginal land. In Seoni, where drinking was part of the tribal way of life, officials maintained that it led to their chronic poverty. Officials in Hoshangabad also blamed drink for the failure of tribal cultivators, and in Betul they described drink as the 'great curse' of the tribes.

Increasingly indebted, landless and addicted to drink, between 1891-1901 the tribal community of the northern Central Provinces reeled under the impact of scarcity and famine.⁴² Even in better times tribals hovered on the brink of starvation, but in districts affected by scarcity, among them Mandla, Seoni and Betul, they suffered added privation until the administration finally conceded famine in 1896-97. By then their position was desperate. In February 1897 officials estimated that half the tribals in Mandla were 'without resources'. There and in other districts the destitute streamed from their villages towards the nearest town, some heading for Jabalpur or Nagpur. Large numbers died on the way. Others disappeared

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 36, 40; *Admin Report, 1901-02*, p. 58; *CPDG*, Damoh, p. 55; *CPDG*, Seoni, p. 52, *CPDG*, Narsimhapur, p. 67, *CPDG*, Hoshangabad, p. 158; *CPDG*, Betul, p. 72, *RLRS Betul, 1921-23*, p. 7; Fuller, *Past and Present Condition*, p. 29; Forsyth, *Highlands*, pp. 160-164, Harnetty, 'Agrarian changes', pp 450-452.

⁴¹ *RLRS Betul, 1894-99*, p. 75; F G. Sly, *Memorandum on the Condition of the People of the CP during the decennial period, 1892-1902*, Nagpur, 1902, p. 11.

⁴² Revenue and Agriculture (RA), *Famine A*, 1897, 29, H. Priest to Sec RAD GOI, 12 February 1897, *CPDG*, Mandla, p. 187.

into the jungles in a fruitless search for food which, when the rains came, comprised roots, damp leaves and toadstools. This diet engendered such diseases that many were incapable of making the trek to a relief centre. As one contemporary noted:

The great majority were hopelessly lost, and not a fourth of them will ever return to their homes. It is impossible to get any approximate idea of the mortality which has followed this migration from the hills, for many perished in the jungles and by the roadsides, and were devoured by jackals and vultures.... The death rate has been steadily rising.... A large proportion of the Gond villages have been totally or partly deserted, and it is improbable that they will be taken up again for years, if ever, by the Gonds.⁴³

Weak from destitution and starvation thousands of tribals fell to fever in Mandla; and one sixth of the population perished. In Betul many succumbed to fever, cholera, dysentery and diarrhoea.

Official policies coupled with tribal attitudes worsened the latter's plight.⁴⁴ Despite petitions from the Baigas, officials refused to allow them to reintroduce *bewar* to ward off starvation. Moreover, the chief commissioner and his officials failed to gauge the scale of tribal distress and so were unable to cope with the numbers of tribals affected by famine. They claimed in defence that tribals did not come to relief works in large numbers; but when critics urged that they needed relief in their own villages working under the 'control of the headman', officials argued they had difficulty in approaching villages, and that Gonds and Baigas in Mandla, 'always suspicious of strangers...took refuge in forests at the approach of a relieving officer, and refused to be tempted to the relief works, preferring to wring a scanty livelihood from the jungle than be forced to work at an uncongenial task in a remote and unknown region.... The authorities were hopelessly deceived.'⁴⁵

For whatever reason, it was not until February 1897 that the authorities discovered that acute distress was prevailing in tribal villages.⁴⁶ Though relief works were developing elsewhere, they realised that unless they got help to these villages many tribals would die of starvation. In some cases this had already happened, where little mounds 'half buried in encroaching jungle were all that remained of the...village clearings'. Elsewhere, as we have seen, tribals deserted their villages en masse; during the rains many became diseased and unable to move. In Mandla many Baigas died of starvation

⁴³ F.H.S. Merewether, *A Tour through the Famine Districts of India*, London, 1898, pp. 158-159

⁴⁴ Famine Commission, *Report*, 1898, p. 290; CPDG, Betul, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁵ CPDG, Mandla, p. 185.

⁴⁶ Sykes, *Quakers in India*, p. 72, D.S. Nag, *Tribal Economy, an Economic Study of the Baiga*, Delhi, 1958, p. 78.

with relief at their doors, 'overlooked by their Gond and Hindu fellow villagers, and themselves afraid to apply'. Numbers of tribals in Betul refused relief until they were past hope of recovery. Despite formidable barriers the administration did what it could to save those who were left. In the monsoon rains 'relieving officers forced their food supplies through deep jungles and flooded rivers, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of the hills.... People ceased to die of starvation, but not to suffer from privation and want.'⁴⁷

Stung by the calamity and charges of inaction, the administration was better prepared for the subsequent famine. The famine commission sympathised with officials trying to stem tribal mortality in 1897, but suggested that the administration make tribal relief a special section of the famine code, and organise village relief in tribal districts. Thus when famine recurred in 1899, the administration was ready. Watching the situation closely, officials established relief works for tribals leaving their villages in large numbers in Hoshangabad and other districts.

Famine and scarcity as part of the crisis took a terrible toll of the tribal community. During the decade the tribal population of the province declined by 11.8 per cent, a rate much higher than that of the general population.⁴⁸ Some of this decline was also due to migration as thousands of tribals quit the region to indenture themselves in the tea plantations of Assam. Others left their villages, never to return. Moreover, the level of crime among tribals rose as they sought in various ways to appease their hunger. An official put a more complacent construction on the events of the decade: 'the high mortality....among the weaker members of society left a population purged of its weaker elements, and with its constitution improved both physically and morally by the trials it had gone through.'⁴⁹

VI

The intensity of the crisis which overwhelmed the northern Central Provinces between 1891–1901 made it unlikely that the region and its tribal inhabitants would recover by 1920. However, after the turn of the century when officials believed recovery to be under way, they restored and in some districts enhanced the revised settlements, mobilised the agriculture department to improve farming methods, and implemented working plans in the forests. Rail and road communications extended further, bringing the more outlying districts into closer contact with the market.

These policies did little to restore the region. The economy stagnated, and the mass of tribals unable to recover from the crisis were as poorly off in 1920 as in 1901. In particular the severe debt encompassing tribals prevented

⁴⁷ CPDG, Mandla, pp. 185–186.

⁴⁸ *Census of 1901*, Vol. XIII, CP, part I, *Report*, p. 139, Sly, Memo, p. 11

⁴⁹ *Census of 1911*, vol. X, CP and Berar, part I, *Report*, pp. 28–29.

them from restoring their agriculture. By 1920 moneylenders had spun a web of debt around the Gond, Korku and Kol notables. The administration had enhanced their revenues and reduced their privileges, adding to their indebtedness, though it blamed the notables for their increasing debt.⁵⁰ In 1901–1902 taluqdars still possessed large estates, but these were generally indebted, and officials complained that they ‘showed little sign of adapting themselves to the altered conditions of life’.

Indebtedness similarly characterised tribal malguzars, tenants and labourers in all districts up to 1920.⁵¹ Gond proprietors in Damoh were ‘grossly improvident’, and in Mandla and Betul they seemed powerless to resist the moneylender. Tenants were at the mercy of moneylenders in Sagar, Mandla, Seoni, Hoshangabad and Betul. In Mandla increased rents forced tribal tenants to move to inferior soils where they struggled to maintain a livelihood. Indebtedness was endemic among the tribal landless, who formed the substratum of villagers in the districts where they were mainly concentrated.

The soils of tribal areas and the technology used to work them, combined to prevent Gonds, Korkus and others from casting off their crippling debts.⁵² In Murwara and Sihora soils were ‘notoriously poor’, and tribal holdings so small that fallows were unthinkable. In the Satpuras Gonds generally held land in jungly tracts where the soil was not good. Officials in Mandla tahsil reported that the quality of tribal land was declining. As noted above rising rents pushed tribals to the poorer soils of the Raigarh–Bichchea tract, where as semi-pastoralists they cultivated millets and unembanked catch rice. Tribals also inhabited the rugged jungles north of Shahpur in Mandla. In Seoni they predominated in the wilder and more unclaimed parts. Even in Hoshangabad tribal enclaves generally comprised areas of poor soil, Sohagpur tahsil which contained old jagirs and the estates of the four Gond rajas being the ‘least fertile and...prosperous’ part of the district.

Increasing regulations governing the use of forests deepened tribal poverty and exposed them to further exploitation. Tribals were concentrated in or near forest areas, yet as we have seen regulations deprived them of their use. By 1900 a tribal:

was forbidden to practise his traditional methods of cultivation. He was ordered to remain in one village....When he had cattle he was kept in a

⁵⁰ *Admin Report, 1901–02*, p. 58; *RLRS Saugor, 1911–16*, p. 93, *CPDG*, Hoshangabad, p. 101; *CPDG*, Betul, p. 95.

⁵¹ *RLRS Mandla, 1904–10*, pp. 40, 42; *RLRS Saugor, 1911–16*, p. 6; *RLRS Seoni, 1916–20*, pp. 22–23, *RLRS Betul, 1916–21*, p. 7, *CPDG*, Damoh, p. 55, *CPDG*, Seoni, p. 113, W.V. Grigson, *Notes on the Aboriginal Problem in the Mandla district*, Nagpur, 1940, p. 10, Grigson, *CP*, pp. 18, 27, 167.

⁵² *RLRS Mandla, 1904–10*, pp. 17, 44, *CPDG*, Hoshangabad, p. 3; Grigson, *CP*, pp. 22, 24.

state of continual anxiety for fear they should stray over the boundary and render him liable to heavy fines. If he was a forest villager, he became liable at any moment to be called to work for the Forest Department. If he lived elsewhere he was forced to obtain a licence for almost every kind of forest produce. At every turn the forest laws cut across his life, destroying his self-confidence.... Every villager breaks at least one forest law every day of his life.... He no longer feels at home in his own country.⁵³

British law also introduced game protection in jungle clearings where tribals had lived for centuries. To enforce this the administration deprived the tribal of his bow and arrow. Malguzars disadvantaged tribals by exploiting the wastes and jungles of villages under their control. Moreover, it was not until 1930 that the government redressed minor grievances relating to the tribals' use of forests for grazing and other purposes.

As earlier, tribal chiefs and malguzars transferred their lands in settlement of debt between 1901–20.⁵⁴ Chiefs in Sagar, Damoh, Hoshangabad and Betul suffered in this way. A similar fate overwhelmed many tribal malguzars. In 1906 officials reported that Gonds in Damoh had lost large numbers of villages in 'recent times'. By 1909 tribals in Jabalpur possessed only a fraction of the villages they once owned. Gond malguzars in Mandla constantly transferred their villages to Hindu moneylenders, so that of 432 Gond villages in 1868 only 144 remained by 1905. Transfers were particularly heavy in Dindori tahsil. In Seoni Gonds continued to lose villages after the second settlement. Tribals were also losing heavily in the Narmada division. In Narsimhapur they still transferred villages after the second settlement; while in Hoshangabad aboriginal holdings in the rich wheat lands continued to decline up to 1940. Tribal malguzars were transferring their villages in Betul, too; and officials believed that their 'elimination in course of time was inevitable'.

Tribal cultivators similarly continued to lose land.⁵⁵ In Sagar tenant holdings fell between 1890–1940, though they rose in Rehli and Khurai tahsils. By 1940 tribal cultivators had practically disappeared from the Seoni haveli, while in the tribal areas of Narsimhapur and Hoshangabad non-tribal malguzars had taken 'as much land as possible' from their tribal tenants. Tenant holdings in Betul also fell between 1897–1941; though the worst

⁵³ V. Elwin, 'Loss of Nerve', from Grigson, CP, pp. 339–340.

⁵⁴ *RLRS Mandla, 1904–10*, p. 40; *RLRS Damoh, 1909–13*, p. 18; *RLRS Saugar, 1911–16*, p. 93; *RLRS Betul, 1916–21*, p. 7; *CPDG, Jubbulpore*, p. 112; *CPDG, Mandla*, pp. 61–62; *CPDG, Narsinghpur*, p. 67; *CPDG, Hoshangabad*, p. 101; *CPDG, Betul*, p. 95. Grigson, CP, p. 48; C Bates, 'Anthropologists, administrators, and the irrationality of tribal society in the former CP of India,' unpublished seminar paper, Cambridge, p. 17.

⁵⁵ *RLRS Seoni, 1916–20*, p. 23; Grigson, CP, pp. 18–19, 27, 32–33, 95; Grigson, Mandla, p. 10.

record of any district was probably held by Mandla, where most tribal cultivators had left the haveli for poorer soils by 1940. In all districts, an official sympathetic to tribals noted that 'for wretchedness, few places could be worse than the aboriginal villages belonging to absentee money-lending and other Hindu and Muslim landlords'.

Everywhere the Hindu moneylender remained the chief beneficiary of tribal debt, adding greatly to his lands between 1901–20.⁵⁶ It was the big moneylending firms who expropriated the estates of the Pitehra raja in Sagar. In Damoh officials noted that the smaller proprietors had given place to moneylenders. In Mandla the Kallars and other moneylenders took over numbers of villages in Dindori tahsil and elsewhere, where the tribals' 'pigeon-like simplicity and addiction to drink...rendered them easy prey'. By settlement in 1911 most villages in Mandla were in the hands of non-resident malguzars, moneylenders and speculators, among them great bankers with multiple estates. In Narsimhapur the Madanpur estate was mortgaged to Raja Gokul Das; while other banias gained villages at the Gonds' expense. In Betul, too, banias seized jungle villages, frequently in payment of bills for the supply of drink.

The administration of the Central Provinces remained largely unsympathetic to the tribals' predicament. They were so because they still saw the aboriginals as a barrier to the region's recovery, and favoured their being displaced by more efficient cultivators. In 1902 Frank Sly, a later governor of the Central Provinces, opposed protecting tribal malguzars on the grounds that 'the aboriginal is a decaying race which has had its day, has demonstrated its inability to improve villages or extend cultivation, and is now fit only for employment in hewing wood and drawing water'.⁵⁷ Other officials held similar views on the grounds that the 'weak should go to the wall'.⁵⁸ They argued that if the aboriginal could not use his land efficiently and hold his own against competitors, he must make way for them, and the state should welcome and even expedite the process. Another group of officials advocated legislation as a way of preventing tribal expropriation, but theirs was a less influential voice. To the administration in general the 'remnant of Gond proprietors still left...represent(ed) the principle of the survival of the fittest' and nothing could stop the process of expropriation.

Officials still condemned aspects of tribal life hostile to the market economy and their ideas of progress.⁵⁹ They attacked tribal agriculture as

⁵⁶ See *RLRS* (3) and *CPDG* for respective districts

⁵⁷ Grigson, CP, p. 84.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83; *CPDG*, Mandla, pp. 62–63.

⁵⁹ *RLRS Mandla, 1904–10*, pp. 40, 42, *RLRS Saugor, 1911–16*, p. 6, *CPDG*, Damoh, p. 55, *CPDG*, Jubbulpore, p. 112, *CPDG*, Mandla, pp. 62–63, 114. Russell and Hira Lal, *Tribes and Castes*, Vol. III, p. 569; Bates, 'Tribal Society', pp. 27, 29. Grigson, CP and Mandla, qv

poverty-stricken compared to the cultivation of Hindu farmers. R.V. Russell, who wrote official handbooks, characterised tribals as 'primitive', tribal malguzars as 'easy going and...addicted to drink and women', and their tenants as 'shiftless and improvident'. Bates, a historian, noted that the agriculture department purveyed the impracticable skills of plains farmers to tribals in hilly areas, and dismissed kodon and kutki (the nutritious staple of tribal cultivators) as 'so much bird seed'. British officials, he maintained, made a fetish of plough cultivation, and stigmatised *dhya* and *bewar* as barriers to capitalist progress. As we have seen some officials voiced contrary views, but they were a minority in an administration which sought to compel tribals to adapt to prevailing economic policies.

It was not until 1916 that the administration moved to salvage tribal fortunes. Officials placed few tribal properties under the court of wards after 1901, and most tribals did not come within the debt conciliation drive launched in several districts. The main official response comprised the Land Alienation Act of 1916, which aimed to restrict the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals by sale, exchange, gift, or will. Though the Act abandoned the old policy of laissez-faire in favour of saving tribal landowners from extinction, it appears to have been a compromise between officials who sought to protect tribals and those who did not. As such the legislation contained weaknesses making it less effective than it might have been. For instance, a deputy commissioner could permit a non-tribal to purchase tribal land following an enquiry. The Act also permitted leases of tribal land for 20 years; and experience proved that tribals leased too much land under this provision.

Again the administration was slow to implement the Act. It came into operation in April 1917, but only in the backward tracts of Narsimhapur and Bhainsdehi tahsils, the latter in Betul. Later that year officials extended the Act to other areas, bringing groups such as the Raj-Gonds of Hoshangabad and the Korkus of Betul within its purview. But extension was a slow process. Harda tahsil did not come under the Act until 1923, and Seoni subdivision till 1926; the Raj-Gonds of Jabalpur and the Korkus of Sohagpur were not notified till 1932. Despite these and other criticisms administrators claimed success for the Act, but the continued transfer of tribal lands in Mandla and elsewhere threw doubt on their claim. In any case by the time the legislation was passed, most of the damage had been done.

Defects in the raiyatwari system also prevented it from making much contribution to tribal welfare or regional recovery.⁶⁰ Officials opposed to the malguzari system had implemented this form of land settlement from the 1870s, settling many tribals as raiyats on second-class land, usually

⁶⁰ *Admin Report, 1903-04*, p. 8; *Resn on Land Revenue Administration, 1905-06*, Annexure B, LR Report, Nabada divn, p. 8; *RLRS Damoh, 1901-13*, p. 34; *RLRS Betul, 1916-21*, Resn 290/1 in Survey and Settlement Dept, 16 August 1923; CPDG, Seoni, p. 147

excised from forests. This proved a major hurdle to the success of the experiment. In Damoh raiyatwari villages were of poor quality. Villages in Seoni and Betul, where raiyatwari agriculture was more important, were also backward. The soil of villages in Seoni was mostly infertile, and the villages remote from lines of trade. Betul had only 89 raiyatwari villages left in 1923 and, though 'useful for grazing', they were poor and their tribal population on the decline. Fuller once rode proudly through the raiyatwari area he had established at Charwa in Hoshangabad. Yet the famines of the nineties devastated Charwa, and by the early twentieth century its inhabitants were poor and migratory, its soils overclassed, and the area an isolated tract in the jungle.

Raiyatwari agriculture in its most important district, Mandla, also suffered from serious disadvantages.⁶¹ There were 140 raiyatwari villages in Mandla tahsil and 430 in Dindori, comprising about 25 per cent of the area to be re-settled in 1911. Yet the villages were old and often those abandoned by malguzars, 167 being uninhabited in that year itself. The raiyats, largely tribal, were 'very backward' and, apart from some black soil areas, their lands required to remain fallow every two or three years. This explained why raiyats in Mandla cultivated 'spasmodically', and were constantly relinquishing land as officials opened new areas for raiyatwari settlement. The net result was a fall in the average holdings of raiyats from 1910, and a decline also in the land available for raiyatwari settlement.

Though repentant the administration did little to revive the Baigas, much less bring them within a framework of regional recovery.⁶² At the re-settlement of Mandla in 1911 officials confessed that they had failed to persuade Baigas to adopt the plough. The latter still preferred to cut wood in the jungles, but by 1912 even this existence was under threat, for the Baigas had exhausted the game in their allotted areas and the *bewar* land and financial aid proved insufficient for their needs. Their pleas and an investigation of forests provoked officials into reassessing the situation, and in 1916 they allowed Baigas to practise shifting cultivation again in selected villages. They must have done so with a light heart, for by then they claimed that some Baigas had taken to 'regular cultivation', working for hire in the cultivating season, uprooting rice seedlings, making bamboo mats and baskets, and collecting and selling honey and other forest produce.

Generally, however, officials left tribals to face the market economy for themselves.⁶³ This challenge, though not new, was becoming increasingly complex after 1900 due to 'contact between the aborigines and their Hindu

⁶¹ *Resn on CP Dept of Rev and Agric, 1903-04*, p. 9; *RLRS Mandla, 1904-10*, pp. 70-71, annual issues of *Resn on the Rev Admin, CP*, for two decades. Grigson, Mandla, p. 10.

⁶² Russell and Hira Lal, *Tribes and Castes*, Vol. III, pp. 91-92; McEldowney, 'Colonial administration', pp. 468, 471, 473.

⁶³ I. Singh, *Gondwana*, pp. 174, 179, 181.

neighbours in the ordinary business of life, cultivation, trade, the commerce and amenities of the common markets, and the conveniences of the railway.⁶⁴ In fact, the administration encouraged such contact by employing tribal workers on roads and railways, where they also supplied produce to railway staff and travellers. Other contacts perhaps went deeper. Itinerant dealers in foreign goods and agricultural produce from an 'alien culture' exerted an influence at weekly markets and annual fairs. And in districts such as Jabalpur many Gonds had long since settled down to permanent cultivation in imitation of their Hindu neighbours. In 1921 an optimistic observer reported that permanent agriculture among tribals was becoming 'universal everywhere'.

The continued decline of tribal languages and religion reflected the surrender of tribal ways before a more aggressive society.⁶⁵ Though Gondi prevailed in places after 1900, many Gonds spoke a 'broken Hindi' or even Marathi. Numbers of Korkus had given up their language as well. These changes occurred in and around towns and larger villages. In Dindori tahsil and areas adjacent to Bilaspur tribals spoke Chhattisgarhi. As for religion, by 1920 Hinduism was permeating the 'whole rank and file of the Gond tribe' in the Satpura country, and tribal myth and magic were fast disappearing. Some tribals had become Christians.

Changes in manners and customs went hand in hand with changes in language and religion.⁶⁶ These were seen to greatest effect among well-to-do tribals, who abandoned traditional ways for Hindu forms. In dress upper class Gond women wore saris, blouses and jumpers like Hindu women. In such households spinning declined in favour of buying local mill and foreign cloth. Similarly Gond men took to the dhoti, waistcoat and shirt, sometimes wearing a coat and pagri. Gonds in Dindori tahsil copied Chhattisgarhi styles of dress. As for appearance some Gond men gave up tattooing and cut their hair. Well-to-do Gond and Korku women wore ornaments like their Hindu neighbours, including earrings, nosepins, glass bangles and beads. Those with money regarded soap as a necessity, while observant non-tribals noted that hair oil was 'not uncommon in the toilet outfit of the Gond girls'. At upper social levels, too, the wicker and bark walls and thatched roofs of forest dwellings were giving way to the mud houses and tiled roofs of lower caste Hindus. Some well-to-do tribals used bricks. By 1940 kerosene and matches had become universal, refined sugar was replacing gur, and tea drinking was spreading among better-off tribals in and near urban centres.

⁶⁴ *Census of 1911*, Vol. X, *CP and Berar*, part I, *Report*, p. 193.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 192–193, Russell and Hira Lal, *Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, pp. 119–138, C.U. Wills, *The Raj-Gond Maharajas of the Satpura Hills*, Nagpur, 1923, pp. 213–214, Singh, *Gondwana*, p. 171.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 170–171, 178.

By contrast, degradation and poverty marked the life of most tribals, reflecting their loss of lands and forests, and their harassment by moneylenders.⁶⁷ The majority, as in Betul, wore loin cloth with dirty pieces of rag to cover their heads and bodies, and a blanket for cooler weather. Many existed on jungle produce and whatever their small earnings could buy. If they had land, they lived on what it produced, supplementing their incomes by field labour. Drink continued to be a problem. Kallars still purchased timber from Gonds in return for liquor, and tribal malguzars yielded villages to Kallar moneylenders to pay for drink. Economic degradation also forced tribals into crime. Illicit distillation and liquor smuggling were rife in Mandla, the former being prevalent in the 'Gond country' as a whole. Gonds were 'addicted to cattle theft' in Seoni; and Betul it was the Gonds who committed the 'most ordinary thefts'.

Education barely touched the tribal community.⁶⁸ The administration had neither the resources nor the will to extend education to the backward classes. It was difficult, too, to take such facilities to remote areas. A few officials and missionaries promoted tribal education, but by 1908 only 3 per cent of tribal boys in the Central Provinces went to school. In Mandla and other districts practically no tribal labourer could read or write by 1920. Illiteracy was also frequent at the malguzar and tenant level, making such men easy prey for banias and moneylenders. In Betul

the aboriginals...being so utterly illiterate...are easily duped by moneylenders; even now many Gonds cannot count beyond 20, and almost all aboriginals accept their liability for debts alleged by moneylenders to have been incurred by their fathers or even ancestors, without question.... The Betul Gond is born a debtor, and is always in debt.... They are ignorant, and lack foresight and thrift.⁶⁹

VII

Among the rural population of the northern Central Provinces the experience of tribal malguzars, peasants and labourers contrasted strongly with official claims of progress between 1861–1891 or recovery after 1900. The status and economic prosperity of the tribal community began to decline with the fall of the Raj–Gond states from the sixteenth century. All non-tribal rulers in central India furthered this decline; but perhaps none did so more than the British administration of the Central Provinces, as they forced tribals out of the forests and into more settled agriculture in an effort to improve them and create a market economy. Harassment by malguzars and those benefiting from British policies merely hastened tribal decline.

⁶⁷ *Police Report, 1904*, p. 15; *Criminal Justice Report, 1912*, np, CPDG, Mandla, p. 61; CPDG, Seoni, p. 61; CPDG, Betul, pp. 72, 77, 157–158, Bates, 'Tribal Society', p. 22.

⁶⁸ Grigson, CP, p. 239; McEldowney, 'Colonial administration', p. 130

⁶⁹ Grigson, CP, p. 167.

Mortality decline in early twentieth century India: A preliminary enquiry

Sumit Guha

St Stephen's College
University of Delhi

The 'modern rise of population'¹ is one of the more remarkable phenomena of demographic history, and has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent decades. The Indian sub-continent, which currently contains a sixth of the human population of the globe has, of course, made no insignificant contribution to this rise. The reasons behind the Indian increase are, however, somewhat obscure, even though India possesses fairly good demographic data enabling all-India population estimates to be made from 1872, and provincial estimates for an even longer period. The Census data show slow growth with considerable fluctuation between 1872 and 1921, and fairly steady and rapid growth from that year to 1981, with the annual growth rate accelerating from just under 1 per cent in 1921–1931, to about 2 per cent after 1951. The population increase after Independence is better understood than that which occurred in the three decades preceding it, and this essay concentrates, therefore, on the possible origins of that early spurt in growth.

Neglecting migration, which has never been a significant source of population change for the sub-continent as a whole, population changes may originate from variations in fertility and mortality. India's twentieth century growth has occurred with an initially stable, and then slowly declining fertility (as measured by the crude birth rate).² Hence, as in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, population increase has been the result of a fall in mortality. In his classic work on India's population, Kingsley Davis tabulated the crude death rates for the period 1911–1948, and observed that the 'rates based on reported deaths reveal an unmistakable downward trend',

¹ The phrase is McKeown's: see T. McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population*, New York, 1976.

² Kingsley Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, Princeton, 1951, Ch. 9

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after 1918. He also examined the infant mortality rates and found that these too 'reveal a high point in 1918 and a gradual decline thereafter.' Davis was aware that many deaths escaped registration, and so he also corrected the registered birth and death rates for each decade on the basis of life tables calculated from successive censuses, and graphed the resulting annual series. The picture that emerges is of a crude birth rate above 40 per thousand, accompanied by a death rate only slightly lower before 1921, but falling significantly below the birth rate thereafter.³ Later demographers have broadly confirmed Davis' picture, even when differing on particular details. Since Davis' tabulated death rate series begins only in 1911, I have recalculated death rates from 1892, and the full series is presented in Appendix Table 1. This series shows the same trend as Davis' shorter one, the mean rate being above 30 per thousand in each of the three decades preceding 1921, and dropping to 24.7 and 22.4 in the subsequent ones. It appears from the foregoing then, that an explanation of population growth must be an explanation of mortality decline.

Davis himself considered this phenomenon, and offered two major explanations: one was the control of famines by the development of roads, railways and irrigation, and the second was the checking of the ravages of epidemic disease by modern medicine.⁴ Taking the explanations sequentially, it is true that there was no really devastating famine in India between 1901 and 1943, but Davis' attribution of this to improvement in irrigation and communications does not seem a wholly adequate explanation. About 20 per cent of the cultivated area was irrigated in 1901, and 23 per cent in 1930;⁵ hardly an increase sufficient to banish famine. It is also difficult to demonstrate that roads or railways were so much better in the first decades of the present century by contrast with the last decade of the previous one as to preclude the recurrence of the tremendous famines that marked the turn of the century.⁶ We may also note that the post-1921 spurt in growth

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34 and Figure 8

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40 'He also mentions the suppression of war and banditry, but this obviously relates to a much earlier period.

⁵ Percentage in 1901 from E. Whitcombe, 'Irrigation', p. 717 in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. II, Cambridge, 1983; for 1930 from G. Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947*, Philadelphia, 1966, Appendix Table 8A.

⁶ It might be argued that communications and irrigation had to develop a certain 'threshold' level before their effects could be felt at all, and that they did not cross this threshold until the twentieth century. This argument does not stand up to examination. The presumed effect of communications and irrigation on famine must act through an improvement in the stability of food supplies, and must therefore manifest itself as a reduction in the instability of prices. Hurd has graphed the coefficient of variation of foodgrain prices 1865-1920, and this shows a dramatic fall in the coefficient between 1865 and 1900, and little improvement thereafter. (Hurd, 'Railways', p. 746 in *Cambridge Economic History*, Vol. II). It is unlikely that if a fall in the c.v. from over 40 per cent in the 1860s to 20 per cent in 1900 could not eliminate famine that a further fall to 17-18 per cent should suddenly eliminate it. In fact it is obvious

occurred in every part of India including areas, such as Bengal, that had known no serious famine since the eighteenth century.

As regards the role of epidemic disease, Davis remarked:

There is one important reason why India was, during the last two centuries, the home of great epidemics: She was being exposed to *foreign contact* for the first time on such a great scale. The nature of bacterial parasitism is apparently such that, at least in many cases, a natural immunity is built up after a number of generations of exposure. Hence isolated and stable communities do not suffer much, because they have developed a natural immunity to old infections and are not exposed to new ones.... India's medieval stagnation was broken down later than that of Europe, so that her period of virulent epidemic disease occurred much later. There is considerable evidence to support the comparison with Europe at an earlier time....

Seemingly, even without medical aid, India's full participation in world contact would have brought her the worst of the epidemics and then, within one or two more centuries, a gradual immunity reducing their virulence. The process of natural immunisation according to this theory, may be taking place even today, although many of the diseases are in such different stages of evolution that it is difficult to say what the total trend is....

[But] scientific medicine which finally stopped most epidemics in Europe is coming to the aid of Asia. Already public health work has brought a sharp decline in Indian epidemics, especially during the last two decades.⁷

This passage interestingly anticipates ideas developed by later scholars. In the notion that the great epidemics followed the breakdown of India's medieval isolation we note a similarity to W.H. McNeill's thesis that confluences of disease pools resulted from increased human movement by sea and land; and also an anticipation of his suggestion that growing immunities checked the virulence of many diseases before medical and sanitary measures could have had any effect.⁸ Davis' faith in the effectiveness of such measures has been contested by historians of medicine. Discussing the western experience, McKeown has pointed out that effective therapies for many important infections were not available till the Second World War, but the decline in

that the benefit to the famine prone resulting from the initial large reduction would be far greater than that following from the subsequent marginal fall in price variability, as even the poor could withstand small fluctuations in prices; the 'threshold' is clearly not the appropriate concept here

⁷ Davis, *Population*, p. 42.

⁸ W.H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, Peregrine, 1978, Ch. 3 and *passim*.

morbidity and mortality from them began much earlier.⁹ Ira Klein, who has carefully analysed the Indian experience in the period under discussion concludes that government health measures had only 'a limited impact in containing mortality from major diseases.'¹⁰

McKeown, when considering the British evidence, successively eliminated various hypotheses explaining mortality decline between 1750 and 1850, and ended by attributing it to improvements in the nutritional status of the population which led to improved resistance to disease.¹¹ This may be arguable for Britain, but it would be difficult to extend it to other countries. It is fairly certainly not applicable to India between the Wars, as Klein has demonstrated by a careful consideration of trends in both income levels and food availability in the first half of the twentieth century. Income per capita, he points out 'stagnated through the first phase of the demographic revolution, when life expectancy was increasing by sixty per cent [*sic*] in two decades.' He also shows that foodgrain availability declined in the same period, and there was a large gap between recommended consumption and actual availability of various foods.¹²

So why, then, did mortality decline? In Klein's view, it declined on the whole, not due to changes in economic or sanitary conditions, but because of changes in host-parasite relations and the growth of biological immunities: in a sense, therefore, attributable to a regional variant of the phenomenon that McNeill had traced on a global scale. Klein argues that:

inter-war declines in Indian mortality symptomised a transmutation of pre-war ecological-immunological imbalances. Indians were unusually exposed in pre-war decades to dangerous microbes, due to the new ecology associated with development, economic and environmental disruption, and disease mobility. One result was the dissemination of infection and death, but another was improved immunological responses among survivors, which limited disease fatalities in the post-war era.¹³

This is certainly an appealing argument, since it obviates the need to postulate major improvements in public health or nutrition in a period when there is little evidence of them, and the hypothesis certainly deserves closer examination.

Now, there are three broad ways in which this sort of shift in population-disease relations could take place. The first is by genetic selection within

⁹ McKeown, *The Modern Rise*, Ch 5

¹⁰ I. Klein, 'Population Growth and Mortality in British India' (in two parts), *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (henceforth *IESHR*), Vol. XXVII, No. 1, 1990, p. 47.

¹¹ McKeown, *The Modern Rise*, pp. 128-129.

¹² Klein, 'Population Growth', Part II, *IESHR*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, pp. 34-37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52

the human population: genetically susceptible individuals die without reproducing, or without completing their reproductive careers, and so the genes of the more resistant come to predominate in the population, thus checking the ravages of disease. This hypothesis encounters certain difficulties, however. To begin with, there is not (to my knowledge with one exception) evidence for the existence of genes that confer resistance to specific diseases. Even if they do exist, it is obvious that the mortality needed to cause them to predominate in a slow-breeding, long-lived animal like man in the space of two generations would have to be simply enormous, unless the gene(s) was already widely present in the population. But then we would have to explain why a susceptible remnant population survived the previous centuries, if not millennia of disease exposure, only to succumb at the end of the nineteenth century.

It is known that the genetically transmitted sickle-cell trait confers resistance to malaria, this being the exception alluded to earlier, and malaria was the most widespread of the infectious diseases of the sub-continent. It is interesting then, to find that the sickle-cell trait is also to be found among a limited segment of the Indian population, reaching fairly high levels of 38 per cent among the tribals of Bastar, and being present among the tribal populations of Central and Western India, and among low castes in the same areas. Its incidence is very low among the rest of the Indian population, despite their indubitable exposure to malaria over many centuries. Negi therefore concludes that the trait is 'a racial attribute of present-day descendants of "Pre-Dravidian" autochthones.'¹⁴ I cite this example as a indication of how slow and limited genetic selection for even a widespread disease is in human populations.

However, even though hosts evolve slowly, microbes can evolve swiftly, and it is possible that reduction in morbidity and mortality could result, as Klein has suggested by the 'evolution of disease-host accommodation'. A similar point has been made by McNeill. There is however, no very good reason to assume that parasite evolution will necessarily direct itself towards a (anthropocentrically viewed) benign outcome, especially in the short run. What we speak of as the virulence of an organism is quite often merely its rapid rate of reproduction, and since a larger population improves the chances of transmission to fresh host, a virulent strain may be quite as much of an evolutionary success as a more benign one.

So, for example, the *falciparum* (malignant) strain of malaria plasmodium attacks red blood cells irrespective of their age, and therefore attains higher population densities in the blood than either *P. vivax* or *P. malariae*. This obviously improves its chances of being picked up and transmitted by mosquitoes, and may contribute to the result that '*falciparum* tends to

¹⁴ R.S. Negi, 'SickleCell Trait in India,' p. 447 and passim, in *Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India*, Vol. XVII, 4, 1968

predominate throughout all tropical regions.¹⁵ Similarly, the El Tor strain of cholera has gained in virulence as it has spread out of its original home in the Sulawesi islands of Indonesia,¹⁶ and this may be a cause and effect relation.

In the case of rabbit myxomatosis, cited by McNeill as a paradigm for the course of new diseases in human populations, the disease is spread by insect vectors that draw blood from the myxomatous patches in the skin. Strains of the disease that become so mild as to produce few such patches tend to die out, and those that are too virulent, to be checked by the rapid die-offs they cause, thus tending to create a cyclical pattern in disease virulence.¹⁷ Interestingly enough, S.C. Seal, an authority on the plague, has noted a periodic pattern in incidence of plague (*Y. pestis*), and suggests that:

a probable explanation is that when an infection reaches almost to a stage of extinction the organism undergoes a mutation in virulence or toxicity or both, as a biological process for the preservation of species. By this procedure the effect of a rise in immunity or resistance against the existing strain in the community is overcome so that the freshly emerging organism may then have another base of life through the epidemic or pandemic which it causes.¹⁸

There is, therefore, little ground for belief that disease–host interaction would take a ‘benign’ turn in a number of diseases in a relatively short period of time. In fact, under conditions of high mortality and an unstable disease environment such as seems to have characterised India in the later nineteenth century, a strategy of fulminant virulence rather than chronic infestation might be favoured by selection, as the benign organism might perish without spreading when its host succumbed suddenly to some other infection. Increases in mobility and aggregation of human populations would also make the fulminant strategy more viable, by reducing the possibility of exhaustion of the supply of (unwilling) hosts. Finally, we may also note that McKeown, using the rather better western materials, found evidence of declining virulence only in the case of one disease—scarlet fever.¹⁹ So the direction of disease–host interactions is not necessarily directed towards prolonging the life of the host.

¹⁵ G W Hunter, W.W. Fry and J.C. Swartzwelder, *A Manual of Tropical Medicine*, fourth ed., New Delhi, 1970, Ch. 35 and p. 316.

¹⁶ K.C. Patnaik and P.N. Kapoor, *Statistical Review of the Cholera Problem in India*, New Delhi, 1967, p. 15.

¹⁷ McKeown, *The Modern Rise*, p. 75.

¹⁸ S.C. Seal, *Plague: Conquest and Eradication in India*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 18.

¹⁹ McKeown, *The Modern Rise*, pp. 82–83.

Finally, we may also consider the complex pattern of passive-active immunisation suggested by Klein in the following passage:

India's numerous, endemic diseases circulated widely in the nineteenth century, and as survivors procreated, their babies usually were exposed. Often aided by the mothers' immunological protection infants recovered quickly, developing their own antibodies. Even if a child's immunity was short-lived, so long as microbes circulated persistently its immunological centres were stimulated and antibody levels remained high; chains of protection were begun, passing from mother to child through generations. New passive immunities arguably were vital in reducing India's inter-war mortality; they allowed babies to repulse infections and develop their own immunities; they helped constrain infant death rates, which declined by almost 30 per cent; and they also made possible multi-generational 'innate acquired resistances', modified by genetic changes in progeny or by evolution of disease-host accommodation.²⁰

This is an ingenious and interesting hypothesis, and has the merit of explaining the otherwise inexplicable fact of a sharp decline in the infant mortality rate in twentieth century India. On the other hand, as Kingsley Davis pointed out, the infant mortality rate declined less than the general death rate, the former falling by 19.6 per cent in the period when the latter fell by 27.6 per cent (by Davis' calculation; see also Table 1 below.) Davis believed that economic and medical conditions were improving, and was puzzled by the smaller decline in infant mortality, and suggested that 'If postneonatal mortality were studied, it would doubtless show a greater percentage

Table 1

*Death Rates per Thousand of Population at Risk:
Annual Averages*

Period	On Census Population			On Registered Births Basis		
	Age Below 10	Age 10+	All Ages	Age 0	Age 1-4	Age 5-9
1892-1901	50.4	22.5	30.4	208	51	N.A.
1902-1911	56.6	24.8	33.7	217	50	18.4
1912-1921	54.4	25.9	33.9	212	50	17.2
1922-1931	41.6	18.1	24.7	177	44	12.9
1932-1941	37.9	16.3	22.4	162	40	10.6
1942-1944	35.7	18.3	23.3	166	42	12.7

Source: See Appendix.

²⁰ Klein, 'Population Growth', Part II, p. 57.

decline than that for all infant mortality, because neonatal mortality is known to be relatively unresponsive to changes in social conditions.²¹

This suggests that specific explanations of mortality decline imply particular patterns of age-specific death rates. We may begin by considering the immunological hypothesis outlined by Klein. Let us take a population newly exposed to a pathogenic organism. The initial effect will be to increase morbidity and mortality at all ages (assuming that the disease is not age-selective). Gradually, however, the proportion of exposed survivors in the population increases, and infants are born with passive immunities and thus protected while they develop active immunity consequent on exposure. Mortality then begins to decline, with the improvement beginning in the lowest age groups, and then spreading through the population as these resistant groups replace the older cohorts. So we should observe *a sequential decline in the death rates of various age-groups over time*. This pattern would not be observed if the initial epidemic was so severe as to leave no non-immune survivors. In that case, the disease should either become extinct or be maintained solely among asymptomatic immune carriers, and flare up when a sufficient number of susceptible individuals had been born, and (perhaps) older immunities become attenuated by non-exposure. In this latter case, we should expect morbidity and mortality to be higher among the younger age-groups. So here also the age-specific mortality would provide a clue to the underlying process at work. However, the only example of the sweeping epidemic type would seem to be the influenza of 1918 which never developed a pattern of cyclical recurrence. In all cases, we should however observe an initial rise in mortality as the new infection bursts upon a susceptible population.

Now, this would imply an 'n-shaped' mortality curve—rise followed by decline. McKeown specifically rejected the immunological argument in the western case because of lack of evidence of an initial rise in mortality. This is not an insuperable objection, however. Klein has argued that:

selected epidemic crises and heightened immunological resistance to individual diseases may occur in sequence without any extraordinary bulge in national mortality. Heightened mortality from exposure to one new disease strain may be balanced by reductions as immunities develop to another, culminating in significant decreases in disease fatalities without a preceding, overt crescendo of death.²²

In other words, the successive peaks caused by different diseases follow each other so closely in time as to give the appearance of a plateau in the

²¹ Davis, *Population* pp. 34–35.

²² Klein, 'Population Growth', Part II, pp. 54–55

death rate, until, finally, the last one having exhausted its virulence, the curve begins to decline. This still implies an initial period of enhanced mortality when the first of the new diseases burst out of its old ecological niche to colonise new populations of hosts. But this may well have occurred in the early nineteenth century, before our records became accurate enough to measure trends in death rates. W.W. Hunter placed the first outbreak of what came to be called 'Burdwan fever'—possibly as Klein suggests, falciparum malaria—in Jessone in 1824.²³ A major cholera pandemic certainly accompanied British troop movements in 1817–20.²⁴ So it is certainly possible that our death rates begin too late to give us a full picture of the successive population–disease encounters. However, even the incomplete series may provide us with a clue as to the course of the diseases. If Klein's hypothesis of the temporal succession of peaks of mortality is correct then we should observe them declining in succession, with the earliest tending to go first.

Now, the recording of cause of death in our period was highly inaccurate, and some three-quarters of deaths were usually put down to either 'fevers' or 'other causes'. However, unmistakable illnesses like cholera and plague would probably be accurately recorded if the death was recorded at all. Cholera, as we noted, burst out in pandemic form in 1817. It should perhaps have been going into decline by the end of the century, but the statistics available to us (which commence in 1865), give no indication of this. Cholera deaths reached a peak around 1900 while plague spread over the whole country. Cholera again reached epidemic proportion in 1906–1907, and its last peak, before decline set in, was in 1924.²⁵ In general, an examination of the statistics gives the impression that diseases coincide, with major epidemics of cholera, plague, and malaria overlapping each other. And, as far as the recorded deaths go, the major identifiable diseases go into an almost simultaneous decline by about 1925. So on this basis we find little support for the 'successive peaking' hypothesis.

So let us turn to the other test of the immunological hypothesis, and examine the pattern of age-specific mortality decline. The computation of age-specific death rates is beset with difficulties. To begin with, there is under-reporting of deaths, which is likely to be both age and sex-selective. This makes it difficult to determine absolute levels or to compare different age groups, but this is not essential for our purposes: we need only to compare the same age-group at different points in time. A more serious difficulty arises from age-misreporting in the Census returns, which usually

²³ W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol III, p. 418.

²⁴ D. Arnold, 'Cholera Mortality in British India', p. 266, in Dyson, ed., *India's Historical Demography*, London, 1989.

²⁵ This account is based on H.W. Bellew, *The History of Cholera in India*, London, 1885, pp. 684–688; Patnaik and Kapoor, *Statistical Review*, pp. 3–5, and *Report of the Sanitary Commissioner*, 1901, App. B.

supply the denominators upon which the death rates are calculated. The problem is particularly acute below the age of 10, with a widespread tendency to under-report young children or to misstate their ages. More specifically, it is believed that the numbers aged five to nine are exaggerated in relation to the numbers below five. For this reason, I have calculated death rates on Census and inter-Census populations in only two classes—below age 10, and age 10 plus (Appendix Table 2). Death rates based on Census populations face another problem as well: the Censuses varied very little in completeness of enumeration, but the quality of death registration definitely varied over space, and quite possibly fluctuated over time. Thus retrenchment in the village chowkidar establishment in the United Provinces is said to have led to a decline in the quality of registration after 1921,²⁶ while on the other hand there were often periodic drives to improve the completeness of registration. It is almost certain that a growing proportion of both births and deaths began to be omitted after 1942, and this trend continued after Independence. Changes in registered death rates may not, therefore, adequately reflect trends in the true rate.

We can in some measure get around this problem by estimating the vital rates independently of the Census populations. This may be done by using the registered births in order to calculate the population at risk in particular years in different age-groups, and thereby work out death rates for smaller age intervals than those already used for the Census data. The advantage of this method is that, since both births and deaths were registered by the same agency in each part of British India, variations in the efficiency of registration will tell upon both numerator and denominator, so that the resulting series will be more consistent indicator of trends than one based on the Census population might be, provided that the interval between the recording of birth and death is not excessively long. This of course is the drawback of the method: the assumption of a constant efficiency of registration grows weaker as the time interval lengthens, or as we move to older cohorts of the population. In addition to this fundamental problem there is also the subsidiary one that birth registration only covered all the provinces in 1892, and considering the older cohorts would force us to considerably shorten our already short time-series. For these reasons, I have not thought it useful to calculate these rates beyond the age of 10. Deaths were reported as being at age below one, age between one and four, and ages five to nine; and the death rates based on birth cohorts have been calculated for the same groups. The rate for age below one, or infant mortality rate has been calculated on the basis of the number of births in the *calendar* year in which the deaths were recorded. This is slightly inaccurate, since a proportion of

²⁶ *Report of the Second Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Health, 9–10 January 1939*. Simla, 1939, p. 102

any year's births die in the subsequent calendar year, but without completing one year of life. Demographers often use the rule of thumb that 70 per cent of a calendar year's infant deaths are attributable to the births of that year. It is not entirely certain that this proportion is applicable to India; from data given in the *Report of the Public Health Commissioner* for 1930, it would seem that the proportion in the previous quinquennium was slightly over 75 per cent, which suggests that infant deaths in India were atypically heavy in the first months of life. No information on the ages below one year is available before 1920, and so I have not attempted any correction for this inaccuracy.

As regards the next age group, one to four, those in this interval are the sum of the relevant four years' births, less infant deaths in those years, and less one-fourth, half and three-fourths respectively of the registered deaths in that age-group in the three years preceding the reference year. The same procedure has been followed for the age group five to nine (allowing, of course, for the fact that this is a five year interval). It may be objected that the assumption that deaths are equally distributed within each year in a given interval is an unsound one, and that deaths are likely to occur more frequently in the earlier years. This is certainly true, but we are interested in estimating the number at risk in a particular year, and, in general, since the deaths in the interval one to four are estimated at 4 to 5 per cent of the population these errors in the distribution would not change the population estimate so much as to seriously bias the calculation, except perhaps in that unique year of enormous mortality—1918. Using modern single-year distributions of deaths to allocate the older data is hazardous because the pattern of childhood disease has changed after Independence—and malaria, a great killer of children below five, has significantly declined.

The results of all these calculations are presented in summary form in Tables 1 and 2, and more fully in the Appendix, and are depicted in Charts

Table 2

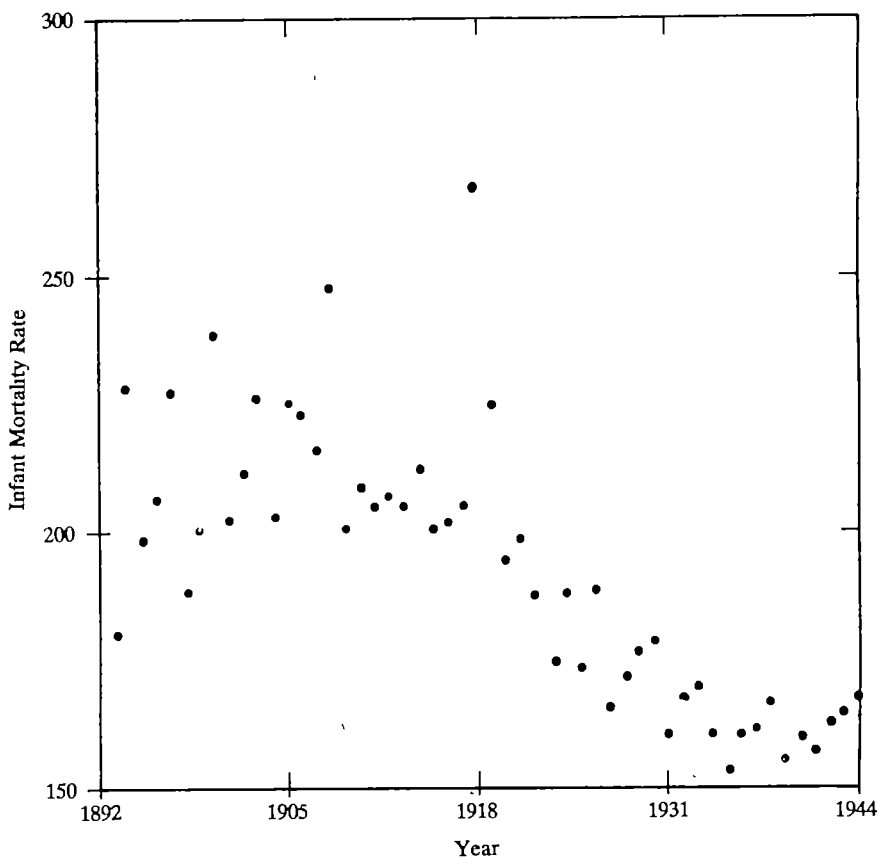
Death Rates: Indexes
(1902-1911 = 100)

Period	On Census Population			On Registered Births Basis		
	Age Below 10	Age 10+	All Ages	Age 0	Age 1-4	Age 5-9
1892-1901	89	91	90	96	102	N.A
1902-1911	100	100	100	100	100	100
1912-1921	96	104	101	98	100	93
1922-1931	73	73	73	82	88	70
1932-1941	67	66	66	75	80	57
1942-1944	63	74	69	76	84	69

Source: Calculated from Table 1.

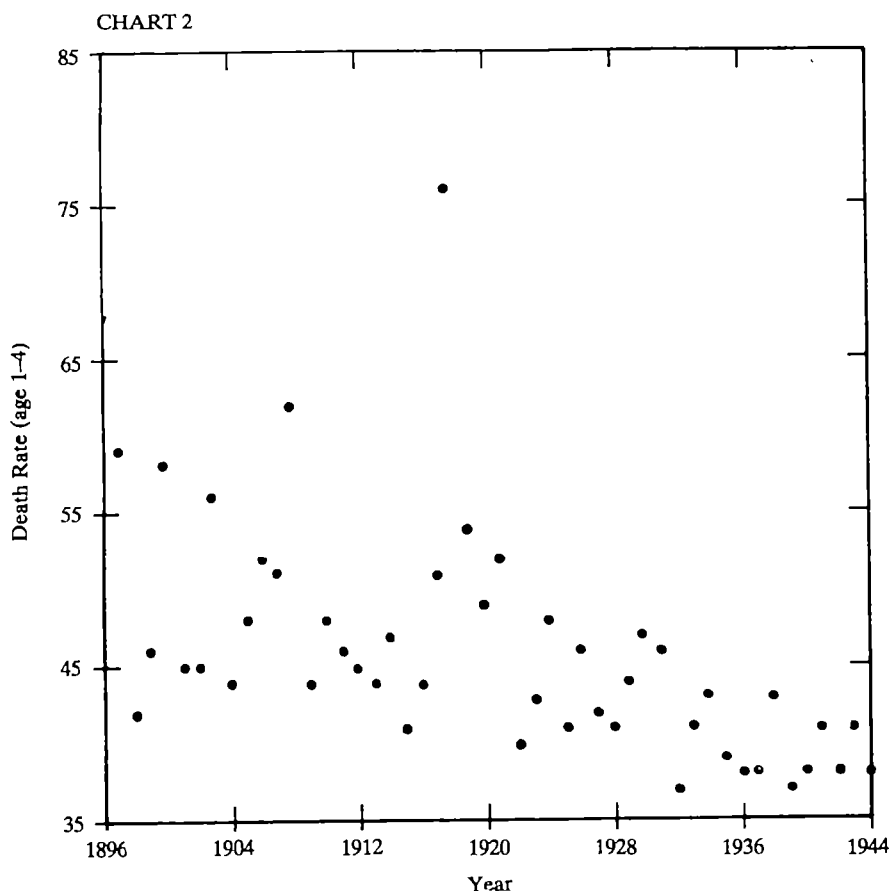
1 to 3. All the data show a noticeable break about 1922, with the death rates being considerably lower after this year than before it. The birth cohort method indicates that the smallest improvement took place in the age group one to four, and the largest in the group five to nine. Since infants are protected against malaria by their lack of p-aminobenzoic acid,²⁷ and the older age group may have begun to develop tolerance or immunity to it, this pattern may simply reflect the continued presence of this disease. If we look at the deaths calculated upon the Census populations, we find that both the age groups show simultaneous and similar improvements in their death rates. Clearly, therefore, the evidence does not support the

CHART 1



²⁷ H. Mashaal, *Clinical Malariology*, Tokyo, 1986, p. 126

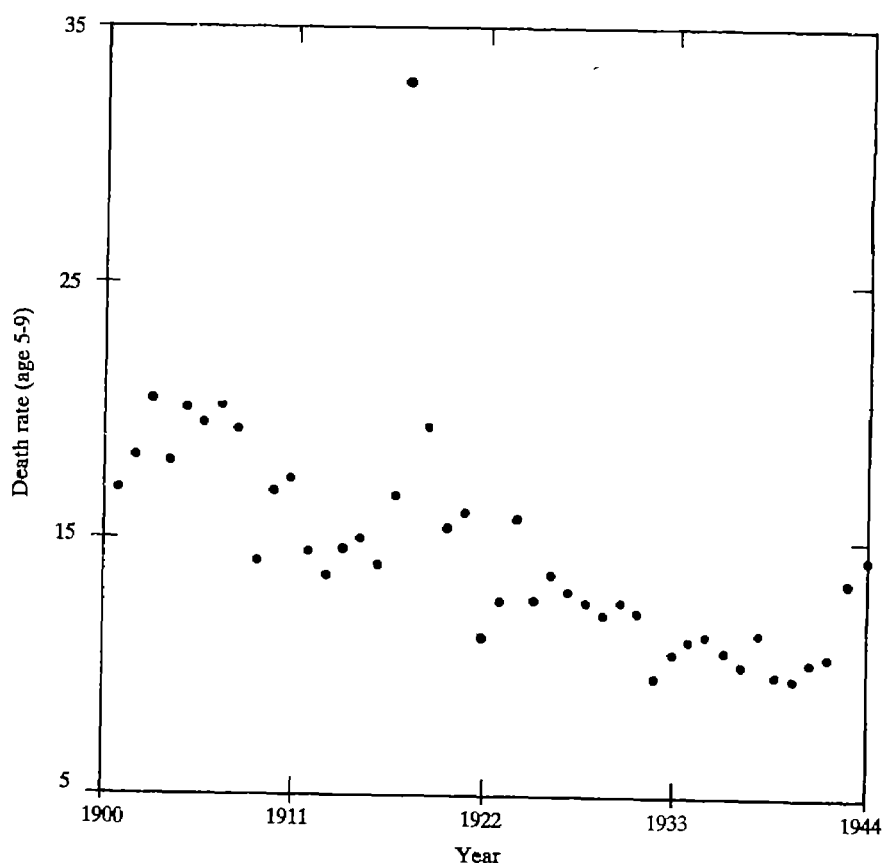
immunological explanation which requires variation across age groups, whereas we find an almost simultaneous improvement at all ages.



How then, is the mortality decline to be explained? I have earlier considered this question in the context of western India in a study of the Bombay Deccan. I then concluded that immunity in the rat and human populations led to the decline of plague and influenza, and the inter-war years also saw no serious crop failures. 'As the causes of crisis mortality were inoperative, the population resumed the upward course that it had maintained through much of the nineteenth century.'²⁸ In short, what we observe is not a change

²⁸ S Guha, *The Agrarian Economy of the Bombay Deccan 1818-1941*, Delhi, 1985, p. 194. The conclusion regarding plague was over-hasty; its retreat is still not fully explained. Seal regards the 'herd immunity among rodents' theory as only a plausible surmise. Seal, *Plague*, p. 18.

CHART 3



of demographic regime but a reversion to normalcy after a period of cataclysms.

Now, in the case of the Deccan this assessment was supported by population data from 1826 to 1941, but I do not yet possess similar estimates for India as a whole. We may, however, test this hypothesis with reference to the last 'normal' census decade: 1881-1891. British India (excluding Burma) grew by 9.4 per cent, and India as a whole by 11.8 per cent. Over a twenty year period this rate of growth would result in increases of 19.7 and 25.0 per cent respectively. Adjusting for an approximate overcount of 7 million in 1941,²⁹ the increase in 1921-1941 was 23.5 per cent for British

²⁹ See *Census of India 1951*, Vol 1, Pt 1B, p 105. The discussion is based on the *Census Reports* for 1891, 1921, 1941 and 1951.

India, and 25 per cent for India as a whole. The overall similarity is striking.

The regional picture is, of course, much more diverse. Bengal and Punjab grow more rapidly than they did in the 1880s, while the South grows more slowly, and the Central Provinces and Bombay increase at nearly the same rate in both periods. Rapid growth in Assam in the twentieth century was related not only to immigration, but also perhaps to improvements in sanitary conditions in the tea gardens and the control of *kala-azar*. The still not fully explained withdrawal of the plague, and governmental efforts at the control of *kala-azar*, smallpox, and cholera may explain part of the inter-war improvement: but the bulk of it is to be explained, in my view, by the greater stability of agricultural production in this period.

Long period fluctuations in the stability of agricultural production were noted by S.R. Sen in 1967. Comparing the period 1900–1901 to 1923–24 with 1924–25 to 1950–51, he observed that while foodgrain output was rising in the first period yet the divergence between peaks and troughs of output was also increasing. On the other hand, the second quarter-century saw a stagnation in output accompanied by a convergence between peaks and troughs, so that agriculture was stagnant but stable.³⁰ The underlying meteorological phenomena were analysed by S.K. Ray in 1971. A comparison of 1900–1924 with 1925–1950 ‘suggests that the relatively stable and unstable periods in past foodgrains production were, in great part, due to rainfall.’ He also analysed weather data for the period 1875–1965 and computed a cereals’ rainfall index. He found that the amount of oscillation in the index itself oscillated, ‘recording alternatively higher and lower oscillations of roughly 24 years span.’³¹ I would attribute a substantial part of the improvement in mortality between the wars to the increase in the stability of foodgrain production in the same period.

It is therefore necessary to demonstrate the connection between the two. This in turn depends on two general propositions: first, that immunity is weakened by a fall in food intake to below some minimum level; and second, that severity of illness is related to the intensity of exposure to the infection. These propositions admittedly over-simplify for the sake of clarity. The interactions of nutrition and infection can be synergistic or antagonistic. Severe malnutrition can inhibit viral infection and malaria, and certain parasites check the development of competitors, as when a severe *ascaris* infestation was observed to suppress malaria.³² However Scrimshaw *et al.*³³ concluded after a detailed review of the evidence:

³⁰ S.R. Sen, *Growth and Instability in Indian Agriculture*, Calcutta, 1971, pp 2–3.

³¹ S.K. Ray, ‘Weather and Reserve Stocks for Foodgrains’, pp. A–135 and A–138 in Review of Agriculture, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 September 1971

³² S. Pattanayak and R.G. Roy, ‘Some Aspects of Malaria in Children’, p. 187 in A. Nandy *et al.*, eds, *Hundred Years of Malaria Research*, Calcutta, 1985.

³³ N.S. Scrimshaw, C.E. Taylor and J.E. Gordon, *Interactions of Nutrition and Infection*, World Health Organisation 1968, p. 178.

Deficiencies severe enough to produce antagonism almost always lower resistance to secondary infections, which then become a significant cause of death. Furthermore, antagonistic relationships usually require a highly specific and severe deficiency obtained only under experimental conditions and rarely seen under natural conditions in either human or animal populations. Thus the generally inadequate diets characteristic of less developed regions typically lead to synergism rather than antagonism.

Since my first proposition only requires a general increase in infections as a consequence of a worsening in nutritional status, but not an increase of every separate infection, I think that Scrimshaw's conclusion affords a sufficient basis for it.

As regards the second proposition, it is evident that in any population with previous exposure to a disease, many persons will possess antibodies to it, but not sufficient to overcome a severe inoculation of the infection. S.R. Christophers earlier in the present century, demonstrated experimentally that mosquitoes that had fed on lightly infected birds carried few sporozoites and were poor transmitters of the infection. On the other hand, mosquitoes fed on heavily infected birds caused much more severe infections, causing death in every case.³⁴ The progress of the disease would be related to the dose of the infection received, and each severe case would tend to generate more severe cases. A similar process has been suggested for measles and whooping cough by Aaby, with intensive exposure and dose of infection determining the case fatality rate.³⁵

Now, a weather-induced harvest shortfall would reduce employment and earnings in the countryside, and through a rise in prices also affect wage-earners, artisans and the poorer classes in towns. Christophers observed of the poorer classes generally that 'in times of scarcity these are accustomed to adapt themselves to circumstances *by proportionately restricting the amount of food they take*'³⁶ Thus weakened, numbers of people would fall prey to the infections already present around them, or dormant within them. There would be a sudden multiplication of foci of unusually acute infection—and often ambulant foci at that. Exposure would increase, and those lacking immunity, as well as those whose immunity could not withstand a heavy dose of infection, would succumb. Secondary infections could follow the primary ones. So death from disease would reach out from

³⁴ S.R. Christophers, *Malaria in the Punjab*, Scientific Memoirs by Officers of the Sanitary and Medical Departments of the Government of India No 46—New Series, Calcutta, 1911, Ch. 15, see also pp. 116–117

³⁵ P. Aaby, 'Malnutrition versus Overcrowding in Child Survival', pp. 357–360 in *Population Today and Tomorrow—Policies, Theories and Methodologies*, Intl Population Conference, New Delhi, 1989

³⁶ Christophers, *Malaria*, p. 107

social groups and regions immediately affected by the scarcity and set up chains of infection persisting beyond the season of crop failure itself. Gradually, the wave of death would dissipate itself over space and time creating the phenomenon of 'joint peaking' of various diseases observable, for example in 1900–1901, 1907–1908, and 1924–25. When crop failures were frequent the successive waves would overlap, maintaining a generally elevated level of mortality and a succession of peaks. On the other hand, greater agricultural stability would feed back into lower mortality via a reduction in the morbidity of the more vulnerable sections of the population. The neonatal death rate—a major component of the infant mortality rate—might be expected to decline as healthier mothers would be less likely to suffer from birth complications, and a better fed ones to have fewer low birth weight infants.

It might appear that improved resistance to disease is incompatible with the recorded decline in food availability per capita in the inter-war period: but this is not a conclusive objection, as my argument turns on stability in food intake rather than improvement in the long-run average consumption. The idea that human beings can adjust to moderate variation in food intake has long been argued by Sukhatme, who asserts that 'the energy requirement of an individual is not static, but is dynamic over a wide, *though limited range*. . . .'³⁷ I would suggest that in the 1920s and 1930s the bulk of the population managed to remain just above the lower limit of this range, whereas earlier at least a significant minority had periodically fallen below the lower limit. Evidence that moderate malnutrition would not enhance the death rate is found in a study of Bangladeshi children by Chen *et al.*³⁸ Children with mild to moderate malnutrition exhibited death rates scarcely different from those of normal nutritional status, while severe malnutrition trebled the death rate. So I would suggest that the Indian population in the second quarter of the twentieth century lived longer because the weather gods enabled it to maintain a stable level of moderate malnutrition rather than alternately plunge between adequate nutrition and severe malnutrition as it was doing earlier. This basic improvement was supplemented by the withdrawal of the plague, the non-recurrence of the lethal influenza, and perhaps by public health measures that checked *kala azar*, cholera and smallpox: but climatic change was the most important source of improvement in mortality.

³⁷ P. V. Sukhatme, 'The Process View of Nutrition', p. 36, in S. K. Roy, ed., *Frontiers of Research in Agriculture*, Calcutta, 1983.

³⁸ Chen is cited in Sukhatme, *ibid.*, p. 57 and Table 11.

Appendix Table 1

*Death Rate per Thousand calculated on registered
births: both sexes*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Below age 1</i>	<i>Age 1 to 4</i>	<i>Age 5 to 9</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1892	210	—	—
1893	180	—	—
1894	228	—	—
1895	198	—	—
1896	206	55	—
1897	227	59	—
1898	188	42	—
1899	200	46	—
1900	238	58	—
1901	202	45	16.9
1902	211	45	18.2
1903	226	56	20.4
1904	203	44	18.0
1905	225	48	20.1
1906	223	52	19.5
1907	216	51	20.2
1908	247	62	19.3
1909	201	44	14.1
1910	209	48	16.8
1911	205	46	17.3
1912	207	45	14.5
1913	205	44	13.6
1914	212	47	14.6
1915	201	41	15.0
1916	202	44	14.0
1917	205	51	16.7
1918	267	76	32.8
1919	225	54	19.4
1920	195	49	15.4
1921	199	52	16.0
1922	188	40	11.2
1923	175	43	12.6
1924	188	48	15.8
1925	174	41	12.7
1926	189	46	13.7
1927	166	42	13.0
1928	172	41	12.6
1929	177	44	12.1
1930	179	47	12.6
1931	161	46	12.2
1932	168	37	9.7
1933	170	41	10.6
1934	164	44	11.5

Appendix Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4
1935	155	39	12.0
1936	161	38	10.7
1937	162	38	10.2
1938	167	43	11.4
1939	156	37	9.8
1940	160	38	9.7
1941	158	41	10.3
1942	163	38	10.5
1943	165	41	13.4
1944	169	38	14.3

Sources: 1892 to 1897 compiled from annual *Reports of the Sanitary Commissioner to the Government of India*; 1898 to 1917 from *Statistics of British India* Pt. V, various issues, 1918 to 1944 from *Statistical Abstract of British India*, various issues, and annual *Reports of the Public Health Commissioner to the Government of India*, various issues.

Note: From 1892 to 1897 only the death rates for various age groups calculated upon their 1891 census population were published, the actual numbers were reconstructed using these rates and the census data, and adjusting on a pro-rata basis for the incomplete coverage in the Central Provinces, Assam and Madras. Burma has been excluded throughout. Information on the Central Provinces for 1934 and 1935 was supplied by this journal's referee, being taken from the annual *Public Health Reports* of the province.

Appendix Table 2

**Death Rates per Thousand of Population estimated
by Interpolation of Census counts**

Year	Below age 10	Age 10 & Above	All ages
1	2	3	4
1892	51	24	32
1893	42	19	25
1894	56	24	33
1895	46	21	28
1896	51	23	31
1897	56	26	35
1898	42	19	25
1899	51	20	29
1900	61	28	37
1901	48	22	30
1902	54	22	31
1903	62	25	35
1904	54	25	33
1905	59	27	36
1906	59	24	34
1907	58	28	37

Appendix Table 2 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4
1908	66	27	38
1909	48	23	30
1910	54	24	32
1911	54	24	32
1912	53	21	30
1913	52	20	29
1914	55	20	30
1915	50	22	30
1916	50	20	29
1917	56	23	32
1918	78	55	61
1919	55	30	37
1920	48	24	31
1921	49	24	31
1922	40	18	24
1923	41	18	25
1924	46	21	28
1925	40	18	24
1926	44	18	26
1927	40	17	24
1928	41	17	24
1929	42	17	24
1930	44	17	25
1931	39	19	25
1932	37	15	21
1933	39	15	22
1934	40	19	25
1935	38	18	24
1936	38	17	23
1937	38	16	22
1938	41	17	24
1939	36	16	22
1940	36	15	21
1941	37	16	22
1942	35	16	21
1943	35	20	24
1944	37	20	25

Sources: For number and ages of deaths, as in Appendix Table 1; but the population upon which the rate is calculated taken from the Censuses, interpolating the inter-Census years, and adjusting for coverage of death registration. After 1932 the estimated mid-year population under registration is taken from the *Statistical Abstracts of British India*, especially issue of 1946-47; prior to that year calculated as follows: from 1891 to 1896 population assumed to grow at 0.47 per cent per annum, and then decline evenly to reach 1901 Census figure. From 1901 to 1918 population grew at 0.47 per cent, with a loss of 12,685,000 due to the influenza epidemic (see I.D. Mills 'Influenza in India', p. 256 in T. Dyson ed., *India's Historical Demography*, London, 1989). The population is then assumed to grow at a constant rate to reach

the 1921 Census figure. A constant growth rate of 0.95 per cent is assumed for the next decade. Note that these are census month rather than mid-year estimates: but the consequent inaccuracy is very small.

The total population having been obtained, proportions above and below age 10 had to be obtained. Here one faced the obstacle of the 'smoothing' of the 1931 data, and the lack of age-data in 1941. Fortunately the *Census of India 1931*, Vol. I, Chap. IV, Subsidiary Table 6 gives the percentage variation of each age group for every province from 1891 onwards. The age distributions 1891 to 1931 were reconstructed from this. For 1941, for want of a better alternative, the distribution was assumed to be the same as that calculated by S.B. Mukherjee, *The Age Distribution of the Indian Population: A Reconstruction for the States and Territories 1881-1961* (Honolulu 1976), basic Table 5, which however, refers to what became the Union of India only. Since the percentages above and below 10 scarcely varied between censuses, it was assumed that the mean of the percentages found at the beginning and end of a decade could be used to calculate the numbers in each age group through that decade. The death rates have then been calculated on the populations thus estimated.

Growth and decline of the mica mining industry in Nellore, 1911–1950

Keshabananda Das

Centre for Development Studies
Trivandrum

Introduction

A major lacuna in the current Indian economic literature, especially that in the field of economic history, has been the lack of adequate treatise on an important sector of the economy—mining/mineral resources. Scholarly studies regarding this subject have been quite few and mostly concentrating upon a particular mineral and that too a particular region, namely, coal in Bihar.¹ Such gaps in the literature become more glaring when one notes the fact that India is endowed with a wide range of high quality minerals (over 100 types) and their contribution to the economy's functioning cannot be overlooked by any logic. Minerals form the starting point of those endless series of manufactures on which the modern industrial civilisation rests

See, for instance, D. Rothermund and D.C. Wadhwa, eds., *Zamindars, Mines and Peasants: Studies in the History of an Indian Coal Field and its Rural Hinterland*, New Delhi, 1978; S. Sinha, *The Internal Colony: A Study in Regional Exploitation*, New Delhi, 1973, and P. P. Mohapatra, 'Coolies and Colliers: A Study of the Agrarian Context of Labour Migration from Chotanagpur, 1880–1920', *Studies in History (N.S.)*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1985. Even in such important studies as A.K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India 1900–1939*, New Delhi, 1980, Dharma Kumar, ed., *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. II, c1757–c1970*, Hyderabad, 1984, and R.K. Roy, *Industrialization in India: Growth and Conflict in the Private Corporate Sector 1914–47*, Delhi, 1979, this sector has not received proper attention.

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The present paper tries to examine the implications of the changing status of an important industry, mica mining, essentially promoted during the inter-war period, with reference to a specific source location, Nellore in South India. Given the level of technological advancement, the global demand, both in respect to price as well as volume, was controlled as per colonial directives. The fortune and sustainability of the industry, eventually, depended mostly upon the nature of capital, state intervention, technological change as also labour force characteristics. It is in this general context that we will enquire if this analysis could serve as a corrective and/or a qualification to the fairly well-known notion based, of course, on the experiences/accounts of a few specific industries, that those industries which were producing mostly for the war demand grew steadily and/or gained a stable footing in the post-Independence industrial India.² This paper has been divided into three sections. Section I introduces the mineral with its unique properties, uses and its role as a vital strategic material. Section II deals with various aspects of this industry's links with the global market, especially, during the war period. Section III focuses on the impact of such an externally-oriented industry on the producers, in particular, and on the local economy, in general. A postscript at the end has been added partly in lieu of 'Conclusions'. This end section, while serving as a note to the current status (i.e., after the 1950s to the present time) of the industry, also suggests it to be almost a consequence and/or follow-up of what happened in the past. The link is what it tries to establish.

I

Mica, in fact, is the only mineral in which India continues to enjoy a virtual 'monopoly' status since the beginning of this century or so. (Mica data prior to 1911 are reportedly unreliable). About 80 per cent of world demand for mica is met by India. In terms of export earnings it remained one of the top three minerals till the 1950s.³ Particularly, during the inter-war period through the early 1950s this was probably one of the most vital strategic minerals the world had ever known. The *History of the Supply Department (1939-1946)* noted that: 'India's 70-year-old mica industry has produced the largest quantity of mica for the United Nations, and can claim a considerable share of credit for victory in Europe'.⁴

A distinctive feature of mica is that, unlike most minerals, it is entirely

² See, D.R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times, 1860-1939*, Delhi, 1984, Ch 16, A K Bagchi, *Private Investment, op cit*, Ch 2 and Part II; and R.K. Roy, *Industrialisation in India, op. cit.*, Chs. 1 and 3.

³ P K. Ghosh, 'Introduction to the Mineral Industry of India', in *Progress of the Mineral Industry of India 1906-1955*, Calcutta, 1956, p. 8.

⁴ S C Aggarwal, *History of the Supply Department 1939-1946*, New Delhi, 1947, p 210

used in its mineral condition.⁵ Its superb thermo-electrical properties coupled with the quality to split into the 'thinnest films', called splittings, had given it a particularly important place, in the manufacture of both electrical and military aeronautics apparatus.⁶

II

In addition to the tremendous growth of the electrical industry in the West during the 1920s⁷ World War I had a major effect on the mica trade. Efforts were made to raise mica production whenever a bulk order would be placed. During that period exports were about 12.6 thousand tonnes and prices rose by 46 per cent from 1,711 per tonne in 1914–15 to Rs. 3,159 in 1918–19.⁸ However, there were also times, when the production of either or both the major varieties (blocks and splittings) had to be greatly cut down or even arrested in consonance with the changing war demand (see Figure 1). For instance, in 1915, partly due to government restrictions on export to various countries and the loss of the German market the sale of all grades of splittings suffered a major setback. As a result, 'the trade in Madras mica was especially depressed'.⁹

Notwithstanding such sporadic and exceptional dulling experiences of the industry, being directly affected by the precarious nature of the global demand, mica exports remained more or less stable during the whole of the 1920s (barring 1921) (see Figure 1). Moreover, the annual export figures during the 1920s were much higher than those during the previous period (that witnessed the war).¹⁰ The annual average quantity exported during 1911–19 was 2,698 tonnes and the same for 1920–29 was 4,030 tonnes.

It would be interesting to note further that both the duration and degree of the 'spell' of the so-called Great Depression were of a much lesser

⁵ J.A. Dunn, 'Mica' in *Bulletins of the Geological Survey of India, Series-A*, No. 19, 1962, p. 31.

⁶ For detailed accounts of such uses, see, J.A. Dunn, *ibid.*, pp. 31–36; and S.C. Aggarwal, *Supply Department*, p. 210.

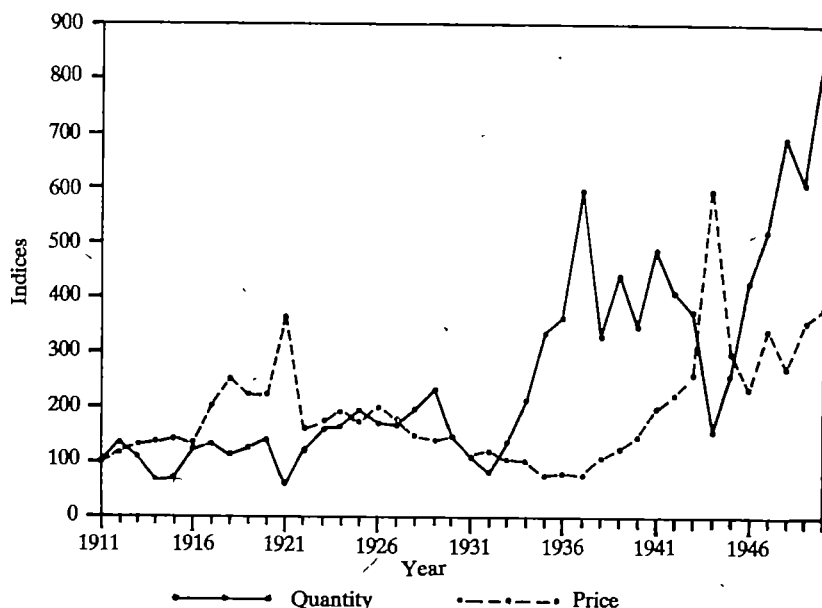
⁷ 'In the 1920s, Europe moved from the age of steam to an age of electricity. Germany and America led the way, and by 1924, 67 per cent and 73 per cent of the industrial power, respectively, came from electricity. The post-war years saw the rationalisation of power supply and the massive expansion of the electrical supply industries in Europe and America. As domestic consumption (of electricity) increased, so did the demand for electrical appliances.' R. and K. MacLeod, 'The Social Relations of Science and Technology 1914–1939' in C.M. Cipolla, ed., *The Twentieth Century, Part I*, Sussex/New York, 1977, p. 322. Also see D.S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*, London, 1969, Ch. 6, for a similar note.

⁸ S.C. Aggarwal, *Supply Department*, p. 210.

⁹ *Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines*, (hereafter *RCIM*) (1916), p. 3.

¹⁰ The industry, of course, "was affected by the post-war slump but made steady progress thereafter" See, D.R. Gadgil, *Industrial Evolution*, p. 292.

FIGURE 1 TRENDS IN INDIAN MICA EXPORTS (1911–1950)



magnitude. In fact, the industry lived through the best part of its prosperity during the period immediately following the global 'crash'. The Depression, notes Gadgil, 'affected production and exports relatively slightly and both soon recovered to reach quantities almost double the level of the twenties from 1936 to 1939'.¹¹ The pre-war and post-war averages of exports of mica were 9,212 and 15,343 tonnes respectively, the highest figure in the 1920s was 5,824 tonnes in 1929, while in 1939 the exports reached a 'record' figure of 11,121 tonnes. Such a steady rise in the mica production during the inter-war period could be a unique phenomenon. 'This was largely due to the impetus provided by the worldwide rearmament in the years preceding the second world war and also during the war'.¹²

Towards the end of 1939, when the war had already begun, a scheme for the restriction of mica exports designed to ensure an adequate supply of 'munitions' mica to His Majesty's Government and its allies was evolved. Drastic export curbs were exercised to safeguard the position. Steps were taken so that 'no supplies reached the enemy'.¹³ With a view to achieve this

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² A K Dey, 'Mica', in *Records of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. 80, 1954, p. 503.

¹³ S.C. Aggarwal, *Supply Department*, p. 211.

end, the Mica Control Order, 1940, was issued under Rule 81 (2) of the Defence of India Rules.

Mica was divided into three categories: (a) Higher Grade Munitions Mica; (b) Lower Grade Munitions Mica; and (c) Non-Munitions Mica. The first category mica could be exported only to the UK: the remaining categories of mica could be exported to Canada, the USA and Australia after being certified as such; while only duly certified non-ammunition mica could be exported to other countries. But no mica of any sort could be exported to European countries and Asiatic Russia. This eventually resulted in a situation when the export figures to some of the regular importing countries, viz., Germany, Japan and France read literally 'nil' for the years 1941-44.¹⁴ (See, Tables 1a and 1b).

Given the highly monopolistic position of the Indian mica industry one would expect higher prices for the first grade mica purchased from India. Mention may be made here of the contention of the Indian producers that the world mica industry was controlled by a 'ring of brokers' operating in London and New York and pocketing 'a lion's share' of the profits. Table 2 shows the price spreads as between India, the UK and the USA for the

Table 1a

Export of Indian Blocks to Major Countries 1921-52

Qty. in tonnes
Val. in Rs. '000

<i>Countries</i>	<i>1921-25</i>	<i>1934-39</i>	<i>1939-45</i>	<i>1947-52</i>
U.K.				
Qty	217	617	772	362
Val.	1425	2607	5276	8047
U.S.A.				
Qty.	339	281	459	418
Val.	718	659	4429	9539
Germany				
Qty	29	69	3	—
Val	98	231	7	—
France				
Qty.	11	39	3	30
Val.	93	107	19	672
Japan				
Qty.	9	159	78	45
Val	73	767	731	966

¹⁴ It is on record that, 'The shortage of mica was among the causes which contributed to Germany's ultimate defeat in the last war. In the absence of this valuable material, which is known as the world's finest insulator, the Germans were reduced to using oil-impregnated paper for insulation purposes in such high power machinery as Zeppelin Engines'. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Table 1b

Export of Indian Splittings to Major Countries 1921-52
Qty. in tonnes
Val. in Rs. '000

Countries	1921-25	1934-38	1939-45	1947-52
U K.				
Qty.	1005	1776	1133	2329
Val.	2038	1961	2829	11189
U S.A.				
Qty.	1328	4194	3914	6361
Val.	2920	1738	10364	38919
Germany				
Qty.	349	898	33	—
Val.	471	793	39	—
France				
Qty.	432	154	9	217
Val.	85	154	23	1554
Japan				
Qty.	89	487	165	128
Val.	97	376	265	1150

Source: 1. *Annual Statement of the Sea-Borne Trade of British India with the British Empire and Foreign Countries*, Vol. 1. Delhi: Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, 1946.

2. *Records of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. 80

Table 2

Appropriate Average Price per Maund of Indian Ruby Mica in India, the U.K. and the U.S.A.
(in Rs.)

Clear and slightly stained	1929			1935			1937		
	India	U.K.	U.S.A.	India	U.K.	U.S.A.	India	U.K.	U.S.A.
Special	1200	1421	2343	1000	—	1770	950	—	2774
A 1	900	—	1126	750	—	1452	825	1777	2172
No. 1	630	1066	1217	500	820	903	650	1503	1850
No. 2	500	902	946	400	710	747	550	1038	1522
No. 3	400	874	834	320	615	617	450	1011	1125
No. 4	350	669	732	250	414	521	—	656	895
No. 5	188	423	439	150	287	380	—	492	386
No. 6	85	86	225	—	77	122	—	143	241

Source: Compiled from R.R. Chowdhury, (1939), *Handbook of Mica*, Calcutta, and *Journal of Scientific and Industrial Research*, October 1943, p. 37.

years 1929, 1935 and 1937. The difference between the prices available to the Indian producer and the price at which the dealers were able to sell an identical quality in London or New York was quite substantial. For instance,

in 1929, for special (clear and slightly stained) mica, the prices (per maund) in the UK and the USA were 18.4 per cent and 95.3 per cent higher than the Indian price. For the same quality of mica, in 1937, the price spread was much larger—the American price being 192 per cent higher than the Indian price.

Realising the significance both of the potential reserves India had and of the impending future dependency on the mineral, towards mid-1940s the US Government took recourse to a systematic and massive programme by which the Supply Department (in India) was obliged to collect and pass on to the former offers of mica for a 'stock-pile' to be held in the US. The US Government then asked the Department to enter into a contract with the Metal Reserve Company (an official body) for the supply of 5 million lbs of splittings. This was followed by a request for another contract for the difference between 9 million lbs of splittings and the quantity of splittings exported through trade channels during the 12 months ending September 1942. In addition there was a fairly large demand for block mica.

The mica commitments of the Supply Department were becoming so large that they suggested better results might be achieved if the British and American Governments got together and established a Purchasing Mission in India with power to finalise contracts directly with the suppliers.¹⁵ Consequently, a Joint Mica Mission composed of representatives of the British and the US Governments was founded. They could make purchases from miners and dealers. The annual average exports increased by 72 per cent and prices by 218 per cent during 1942–50 as compared to that of the previous decade, the 1930s.¹⁶

Concurrent to the stock-piling by the US, an intensive research was going on abroad, especially in the US, to find a suitable substitute for mica¹⁷. After a series of futile attempts at it, finally in 1950, the *New York Times* (11 June) flashed the news about the production of what was called 'integrated mica'—'a synthetic mica which possessed the same electrical properties as natural mica.' This artificial mica was made by a 'secret

¹⁵ This was done in accordance with the recommendations of the American Technical Mission to India in 1942. Among other things, it recommended that 'the orders of the United States and the United Kingdom for mica be placed as far as in advance as possible, in order that the industry may adequately schedule its production program and provide for the continuous employment of the workers'. American Technical Mission to India, *A Survey of India's Industrial Production for War Purposes: Report of the American Technical Mission to India* (1942), pp. 44–45.

¹⁶ On account of export difficulties, production was comparatively lower in 1943–45, and a small amount of stocks accumulated during these years, but were disposed of in 1946. See, A. K. Dey, 'Mica', p. 503.

¹⁷ Even earlier, during and after the World War I, other substitutes such as, Pertinax, Bakelite, Paxolin, Formalite, Leatheroid, Alsifilm, Lectrofilm and Diaplex, had been tried, but 'none of them possessed the same properties as natural mica'. For details, see, J. A. Dunn, 'Mica', pp. 36–37.

process' from mica scrap which was so abundant in the US. Evolved by the National Security Conference, this product ensured America to remain independent of foreign supplies of certain grades of mica.¹⁸

One very essential point that needs to be noted here is regarding the absolute lack of efforts as well as support, both at the governmental and private levels, to promote either the mining or the manufacturing industry in the country. A mineral of great use so plentifully available could not be developed indigenously at any stage of its undulating fortunes. As early as in 1920 it was aggrieved that 'practically the whole of mica is exported. No attempt is made to work up the material. The enormous accumulations of waste mica in the different mining centres have not been put to any practical use.'¹⁹ Even till the World War II began, 'no use was made of pulverized mica, nor was the manufacture of micanite attempted.'²⁰ The RMEC (1946) had made a meticulous enquiry into the demand for and uses of mica in India and noted that 'out of the crude mica raised from the mines, only about twenty *per cent* is used in the shape of dressed mica and its products, and the balance is cast aside as waste.' It had specifically urged for 'original research for the discovery of new methods of utilising mica or of preparing mica for known uses, to which mica has been put in other countries, and into the methods employed by such countries for preparing mica for these purposes.'²¹ Nonetheless, by 1947, the manufacturing industry was reportedly still in its 'infancy.'²² It was realised that because of growth of unregulated traffic in mica and few such minerals, i.e., without any state concern, the largest quantity of the mineral was extracted mainly for the purpose of 'export trade in the raw and at a rate which will in future years deplete the reserves of key minerals.'²³

III

As noted in the previous section, Indian mica mining activity was functioning

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ I.B. Saksena, *The Economic Effects of War in India, Part I—Indian Industrial Development During the War*, Lucknow, 1920, p. 131. It also noted that 'in spite of the raw material (mica) and the monopoly of shellac (a must for micanite cementing), micanite is only being manufactured in small quantities'. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁰ For details, see, D.R. Gadgil, *Industrial Evolution*, p. 275.

²¹ *Report of the Mica Enquiry Committee 1944-45* (hereafter RMEC), Delhi, 1946, p. 59. It also suggested that the investigation should be supplemented by propaganda to make known the results of the investigation to all persons and bodies likely to put the knowledge to commercial use. That such propaganda is necessary will appear from the ignorance regarding mica and its products which we found even in technical circles. *Ibid*. For a highly documented description, see, Ch. IX, pp. 51-59.

²² S.C. Aggarwal, *Supply Department*, p. 213.

²³ I.S. Jethu, ed., *The Indian and Pakistan Year Book, 1948, Vol. XXXIV*, Bombay, 1948, p. 782.

practically in total response to every possible movement in world demand. In keeping with the growing global demand for mica the Indian mines²⁴ accentuated their activities. Here, in this paper, we will confine our discussion to the Nellore mica industry.

The Nellore mica belt strikes N.N.W.-S.S.E. for over 60 miles and is about 15-20 miles broad. The mines are spread throughout the belt, but are mostly clustered within the limits of Kavali, Atmakur, Rapur (including Podalakur) and Gudur taluks (see Map I). Mica of this belt is characteristically green in colour, though at some places reddish coloured mica, like the ruby mica of Bihar, is also found. Again, larger sheets are available from the mica books of Nellore than those from Bihar.²⁵ The mica-bearing areas are usually on low-lying plain country and mostly infertile, rocky in soil, and covered by shrubby jungle.²⁶ This area is not served by any good means of communication and 'a road expected to touch most of the important mines has not yet been constructed, though one was projected long ago'.²⁷

The history of mica mining in Nellore dates as far back as 1887, when the Collector was authorised to auction the mining in certain localities for only two years. During 1888, three mines in Utukur, Podalakur and Chaganam were put to auction, but only the Utukur mine found a purchaser for Rs. 75 per annum. In 1890, one Ansur Subba Nayudu secured leases in each of the villages of Saidapuram, Chaganam and Utukur at an average annual rental of Rs. 50 per acre. Following the high profits made at Utukur, competitive bidding raised the auction price in 1890 to Rs. 3,005 per annum. Gradually, the number of leases increased and, in 1898, the Government granted 71 mining leases covering some 2,442 acres, yielding Rs. 35,000 as royalty annually. Subsequently, mining was extended to various other localities. By 1944 there were over 250 leases covering over 7,000 acres, yielding about Rs. 1 lakh as royalty per annum. The leases were granted for a period of 20 to 30 years with the prospect of renewal. 'Of late owing to the wartime demand for mica, there has been a great rush for prospecting licences and mining leases by a number of people who have not previously been in the business.'²⁸

Table 3 shows the growth of the mines during the first half of this century. Within a period of about three decades of its beginning (that witnessed the World War I and the expansion of electrical industry in the West) more than 100 mines had been working. The Census of India, 1931, reported

²⁴ Mica is chiefly available in three zones—Bihar (producing about 55 per cent of the total supply), Nellore in the South (producing about 30 per cent) and Rajasthan.

²⁵ See, B C Roy, 'The Nellore Mica Belt', in *Bulletins of the GSI, Series-A*, No. 11, 1956, pp. 12-13.

²⁶ For further details, see, J A. Dunn, 'Mica', p. 44; and also, B.P. Adarkar, *Report on Labour Conditions in Mica Mining and Mica Manufacturing Industry*, Delhi, 1945, p. 36.

²⁷ B.P. Adarkar, *ibid*, p. 36

²⁸ B.C. Roy, 'Nellore Mica Belt', p. 16

MAP 1 SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM B.C. ROY (1956).
(GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA, BULL. SER.A., NO. 11, PL.1)

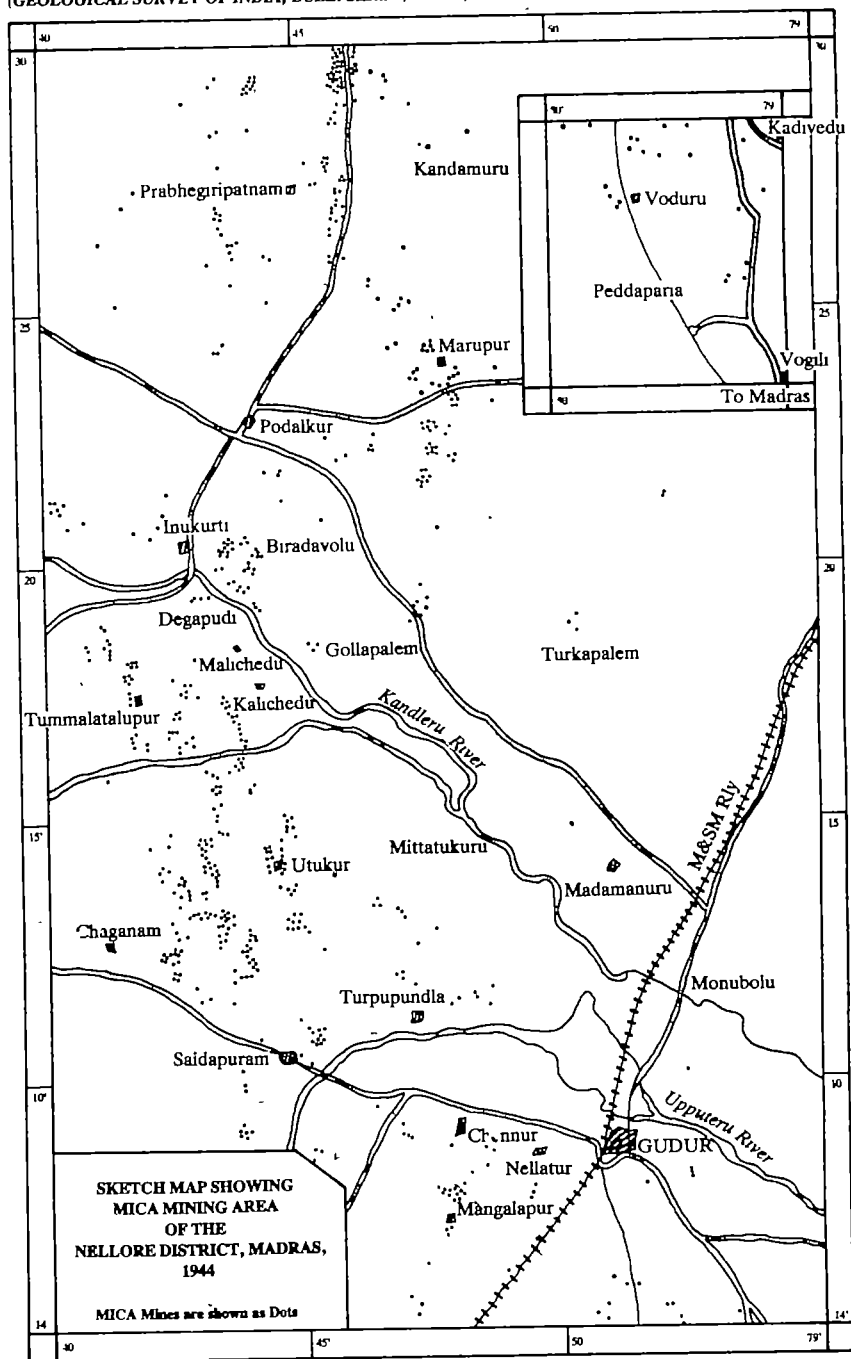


Table 3

Number of Mines and Average Daily Employment, Madras, 1888–1944.

Year	No. of Mines	Average Daily Employment		
		Males	Females	Total
1888	1	na	na	na
1898	71	na	na	na
1915	68	1454	1068	2522
1919	110	2213	1506	3719
1921	72	1976	979	2955
1925	82	1988	2657	4645
1927	116	3498	2656	6154
1928	97	2577	1790	4367
1931	57	na	na	na
1934	46	na	na	na
1936	86	na	na	na
1938	122	4065	2117	6182
1939	123	4606	2273	6879
1940	114	4401	1995	6396
1941	86	4458	2188	6646
1942	124	5999	3315	9314
1943	195	7463	3916	11379
1944	250	na	na	12000*

Source: For the years 1888, 1898 and 1944, B C. Roy (1956), p. 16;

For the years 1925, 1927 and 1928, *RCLE* (1931), p. 260;

For the years 1931, 1934 and 1936, *RMEC* (1946), p. 23;

For the years 1938–43, B P. Adarkar (1945), p. 84;

For the year 1921, *Census of India 1921 Madras, Part II, Tables*, p. 289;

For the years 1915 and 1919, *RCIM* (1916 and 1920).

Note: *Approximate na = Not available.

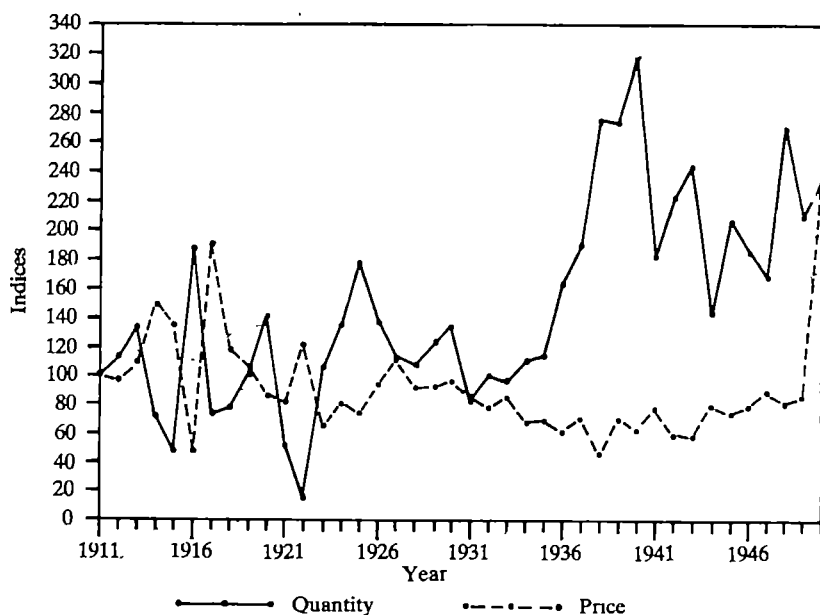
that exploitation of minerals in Madras showed an 'enormous' increase of 300 per cent over the last decade. 'Most of this is due to increase under non-metallic minerals and almost certainly the bulk of this relates to mica...' ²⁹ Also, the last few years of the World War II accounted for the second major boost to the mining activity. The number of mines increased from 123 to 250 between 1939–44 whereas the labour employed went up from 6,879 to nearly 12,000 during the same period.

As far as the exports of mica from Madras is concerned one notices a very highly vacillating trend, both for the quantity as well as the prices, up to 1930 (see, Table 4 and Figure 2). But, after this period a very discernible leap in the mica exports at least till the onset of the World War II and beyond (though of a lesser magnitude for the latter phase) suggests the rapidity with which mining was being operated in the region. However, the

²⁹ M W M Yeatts, *Census of India, 1931, Vol XIV, Part I, Report*, Madras, 1932, pp 195–196

most striking feature is the very low level (and almost declining at times) of prices offered for the produce during the period. The general observation would be that, for the entire period, the overall price trend was more or less stagnant, and this was occurring in contrast to the quantity trend which, though fluctuating, was definitely rising gently. Even compared to the pre-1930 period it was too prostrate. This was partly because, as referred to in the previous section, the Indian mines had to supply huge quantities of mica, especially to the UK and the USA, at a lower price as part of a colonial commitment to provide raw materials both for the civil and military imperatives of the metropolis.

FIGURE 2 TRENDS IN MICA EXPORTS FROM MADRAS (1911–1950)



It is important to note that even with such a fairly long history of its existence, the industry was not organised or developed on sound scientific lines. This was mainly because of the fact that a large number of individual miners and traders were engaged in this industry purely on a speculative basis. Whereas a few could make enormous fortunes in mica mining and trade several others lost heavily and had given up the work. This was reflected in the rate at which mines were being opened and closed in any particular year. For example, in 1916, 34 new mines were opened and 20 mines closed. In 1918, 23 were opened and 15 closed. For 1922 the respective figures were 2 and 29.³⁰ Thus, the industry continued to be managed as a speculative

³⁰ Compiled from relevant issues of *RCIM*

proposition by a number of people who neither had adequate resources nor the abilities necessary for scientific organisation. Again, there prevailed the tendency to increase the number of mines so that the Excess Profit Tax could be evaded by distributing the output of a well-yielding mine over a number of mines showing a small volume of profit in each concern. As a consequence, out of the 200 to 250 mines which were nominally existent, only some 20 mines were well-established and were performing profitably.³¹

Table 4

Exports of Mica from Madras, 1911–50

<i>Year</i>	<i>Qty (Tonnes)</i>	<i>Price (in Rs.)</i>
1911	422 08	1169.74
1912	470.20	1125.88
1913	569 07	1251 89
1914	304 30	1781.48
1915	194.81	1596 04
1916	796 45	545 15
1917	307.40	2230 87
1918	332 55	1388.03
1919	422 79	1243.64
1920	597 17	1021.29
1921	220 46	947.72
1922	66.10	1444.41
1923	447 84	756 11
1924	572.78	955.60
1925	750 92	860.28
1926	588 58	1093.62
1927	485.03	1305.04
1928	454.60	1072 15
1929	517 96	1073.51
1930	576.59	1133.84
1931	353.54	995 74
1932	425 23	916.98
1933	406.73	1007.38
1934	466.89	805.48
1935	482 44	817 75
1936	695.54	732.48
1937	801 12	828.95
1938	1164.31	522.41
1939	1150.74	838 65
1940	1356 02	740.39
1941	768.30	920.12
1942	932.06	712.08
1943	1029.97	680 29

³¹ B P Adarkar, *Labour Conditions*, p 36

(Table 4 Contd)

Year	Qty (Tonnes)	Price (in Rs.)
1944	606.11	930.67
1945	879 83	871 85
1946	789 23	921.05
1947	714.29	1041.39
1948	1147.90	965 06
1949	887 70	995.89
1950	991.05	2857 54

Source: For the years 1911–1922, *Statistical Abstract Relating to British India* (Nos. 52 & 57), London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919 and 1925.

For the years 1923–1938, *Statistical Abstract for British India with Statistics, where available, relating to certain Indian States* Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1935 and 1942

For the year 1939, B.C. Roy (1956), p. 43

For the years 1940–50, J. A. Dunn (1962), pp 98–99

Such haphazard, yet growing, mining activity on the basis of very poor prospecting, improper technical knowledge and inadequate finances had cast its deleterious spell on the labour engaged. In his written evidence proffered to the Royal Commission on Labour (1931), the Collector of Nellore had observed that, 'If...(mica) mining suddenly ceased, comparatively few people will be affected, and the few thus affected could turn to other occupations, like agriculture, for a livelihood, and would speedily be absorbed in those occupations. Even now, mine-owners sometimes engage in agricultural pursuits as a subsidiary occupation.'³² However, such a forethought was never to be eventuated. After a period of little above a decade, the *Report on Labour Conditions in Mica Mining and Manufacturing Industry* noted that: 'The overwhelming majority of the population of this area (Nellore) have to live mainly on occupations connected with mica, as there are no other industries and agricultural employment is available only to a very limited extent.'³³ The increasing dependency on the mining activities and the precarious conditions of the occupation made the lives of the labour miserable.

Here, we would make a note on the prospecting of mines in order to comprehend the unstable nature of labour's employment. Usually, pits were dug arbitrarily either along the elongation of the strike of earlier workings, or where existence of surface mica was indicated until the surface was studded with pits looking like 'rabbit warrens.' Pits which exhibited mica were enlarged, and the waste rock piled at the sides; this often required re-handling the debris as the pits were widened further.

³² *Royal Commission on Labour in India Written Evidence, Vol VII, Part I, Madras Presidency and Coorg* (hereafter *RCLE*), London, 1931, p. 260

³³ B.P. Adarkar, *Labour Conditions*, p. 36.

'In many cases development is rendered difficult and work suspended sooner or later, if the pits are flooded and filled by debris washed into them from the dump heaps...sometimes minor outcrops of quartzites are mistaken for vein quartz and the quartzite wells are followed in the hope of getting mica'.³⁴ The above process necessarily meant that the labour even did not have a tentative idea about his term of employment as the mining activity could be abandoned any time at a particular pit and he/she would be rendered jobless.

Table 5

Land-Man Ratio in Nellore District, 1911–51

Year	GCA ('000 Acres)	Population	L/M
1911	1406	8,95,282	1.57
1921	1361	9,32,980	1.46
1931	1520	10,08,608	1.51
1941	1468	10,89,892	1.35
1951	1471	12,16,974	1.21

Source: GCA for the years 1909–10 to 1919–20 and 1930–31 to 1938–39, *Agricultural Statistics of India, Vol. I*. Various issues.

For the years 1920–21 to 1927–28, *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Madras (Land Revenue and Settlement)*, *Statistics-Agricultural*. Various issues.

For the years 1928–29, 1929–30 and 1947–48, *Season and Crop Report*. Relevant issues.

For the years 1939–40 to 1946–47, *Agricultural Statistics of India, Vol. I*.

For the years 1948–49 to 1951–52, *Agricultural Statistics of India, Vol. II*.

Population figures from *Census of India, 1971, Series 2, Andhra Pradesh, Part II A. General Population Tables*, p. 92.

For one thing, agriculture did not progress during the 1930s and 1940s in this region.³⁵ One very obvious observation can be made from the trend in the gross cropped area (GCA) of the district. As can be seen in Figure 3, following the exceptionally sharp fall in the GCA during 1915–1922 (mainly due to the widespread influenza epidemic), during the 1930s and 1940s the GCA was declining, so much so that it could never reach the level registered as far back as in 1911. Even there was no increase in irrigation in Nellore.³⁶ Agriculture so badly hit, got worsened with the rise in the population in the

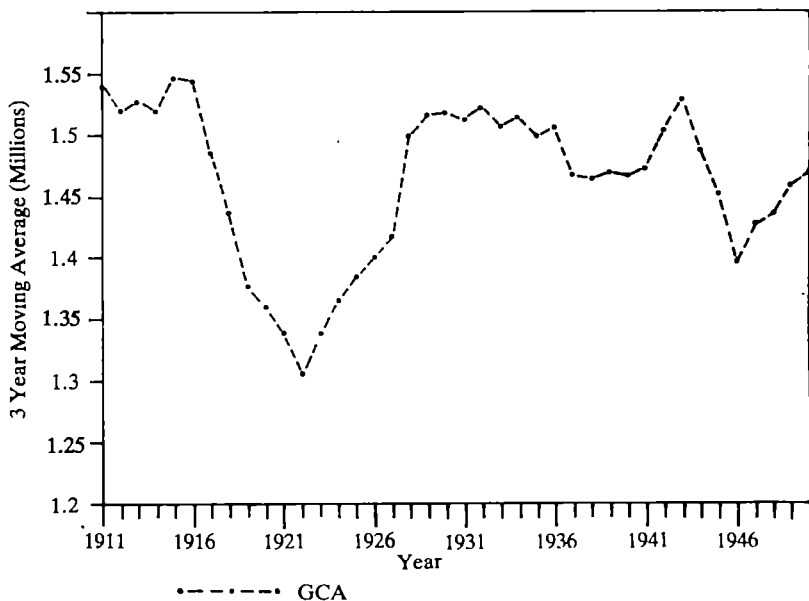
³⁴ B.C. Roy, 'Nellore Mica Belt', pp. 16–17. In geological terms, the workable veins are found only in pegmatites which are associated with biotite-schist, feldspathic biotite-schist, mica-schist, muscovite-biotite-schist, chlorite-schist, hornblende-schist, etc., but never in quartzite and quartz-schist. *Ibid*

³⁵ For a critical account of general agricultural stagnation resulting both from 'environmental and institutional' factors in the Madras Province during this period, see, B.V. Narayanaswami Naidu, *Report of the Economist for Enquiry into Rural Indebtedness*, Madras, 1946, Ch. II, esp. pp. 10–13.

³⁶ Dharma Kumar, 'South India', in her ed. *Cambridge Economic History*, p. 231.

district.³⁷ Table 5 shows the deteriorating land-man ratio, especially after the 1930s. This exerted tremendous pressure on land and the labour had to search for alternative sources of employment, which were practically so scanty. Being near Madras the Nellore labourer had found it easy to emigrate, but 'after 1921 foreign sources of employment were drying up'.³⁸ As landholdings grew smaller, landowners employed fewer annual labourers. With the growth in the size of casual labour force the employer had less need to secure his labour force. Added to such insecurity of labour in the agricultural sector (where, at least, seasonal employment availability was more or less positive), the job at the mines was very unpredictable.

FIGURE 3 TRENDS IN GROSS CROPPED AREA,
NELLORE DISTRICT (1911-1950)



The following account of the conditions of labour in Madras mica mines (located almost in full in the Nellore district barring 3 or 4 small ones in Salem and Nilgiris) based mostly on the *RCLE* (1931) and Adarkar (1945) would be useful in furthering our analysis.

Mines were kept open (unless they were abandoned for the reasons stated above) throughout the year. The amount of labour required would vary with the output, which, in turn, was regulated to suit the 'very irregular and unsteady' market conditions. The labour was wholly local and was drawn from nearby villages. Excepting the few clerical staff, rest of the

³⁷ Above 90 per cent of the district's population were rural-based

³⁸ Dharma Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History*, p 239

workers—blasters, jumpers, drillers, graders, sorters, round cutters, unskilled labourers—were all temporarily employed. The labour force roughly consisted of 70 per cent Malas and Madigas and the remaining, Yanadis, Muhammadams, Woddars, etc. The supply of labour was so plentiful that mere intimation in the villages that more hands were needed was sufficient to attract workers.

As far as the nature of the occupation was concerned it was one of the most strenuous and risky jobs performed in the severely unhealthy ambit. We will refer to them below.

Length of the Working Day

The workers had to walk for about 5 to 6 hours daily to reach the work place. Again, in the deep mines, the working hours (8 hours a day, 6 days in a week, at the minimum) were much longer than what the Indian Mines Act prescribed. Since the steps in the mines were not well-laid throughout and unsafe ladders were being used, three-fourths of an hour was spent in reaching down and coming up alone. Such extra time was not accounted for, given the fact that about two-thirds of workers were employed underground.³⁹ For the night shifts no additional remuneration was paid.

Health and Sanitation

Mica mining is extremely hazardous from the view point of the labourer's health. Owing to the speculative nature of the industry, owners were not inclined to invest sufficient amount of capital in widening shafts, providing lifts, etc., as was done in the coal mines. Usually, mica mines were 'extremely unhealthy, dingy, damp, ill-ventilated and insufficiently lighted'.⁴⁰ Workers developed rheumatism and often suffered injuries due to fall from ladders. Dry-drilling of the pegmatites, which caused a lot of dust, was responsible for a considerable amount of silicosis amongst miners. Nellore mica fields were some of the worst malaria and hookworm infested regions in the country. Dirty and stagnant ponds were the only sources of water in the localities. Diseases like dyspepsia, ankylostomiasis, bronchitis, goitre, various ailments of skin and eye were most rampant amongst the labour.⁴¹ Even by 1944, for all the workers in this mining district there was only one dispensary at Podalakur which was about six miles away from the cluster of mines.

Wages

The Labour Investigation Committee in its *Main Report* pointed out that

³⁹ RCLE, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁰ B.P. Adarkar, *Labour Conditions*, p. 67.

⁴¹ RCLE, *op. cit.*, p. 262

the 'wage level in the mica industry is probably the lowest in India with the exception perhaps of certain unregulated industries like shellac and bidi making'.⁴²

Table 6, based on rather limited information available, is very striking. We notice a clear-cut decline in the real wages of the unskilled mine workers between 1930 and 1944 (a period when mining activity was at the peak; see Figure 2). We have used a composite price index to deflate the money wages. For the above period, whereas for males the real wage decline was -6.33 per cent, for female workers it was -4.61 per cent. This decline was quite considerable given the +8.3 per cent hike in the index of the composite price index.

Table 6

Growth Rates of Real Wages of Mica Mine Labour and Price Index in Nellore, 1930-44

Year	Real Wages (Rs.)		Composite Price Index
	Males	Females	
1930	0.50	0.31	100.00
1944	0.20	0.16	304.56
Growth Rates	-6.33%	-4.61%	+8.30%

Source: *RCLE* (1931), p. 262; *RCIM* (1939), p. 6; B.P. Adarkar (1945), p. 44; and *Agricultural Statistics of British India*, relevant issues.

Note: The Composite Price Index is calculated taking the harvest prices of four major food crops, namely, rice, jowar, bajra and ragi, with equal weights.

Indebtedness and Absenteeism

Most of the workers were heavily indebted to their employers as well as local shopkeepers to manage daily subsistence. High incidence of liquor consumption was another potent cause of indebtedness. A survey of 19 mines showed above 40 per cent absenteeism among workers, partly because of drudgery of work and subsequent addiction to drinking. However, strangely enough, the employers insisted that a cut in the wages would lower the degree of absenteeism.

Administration

Another serious lapse related to the insufficient coverage and enforcement of the Indian Mines Act so that very little attention was paid to the labour's welfare.

⁴² *Labour Investigation Committee, Main Report* (hereafter *LIC*) (year and place of publication'), p. 266

For administration purposes, the mines were under the control of the Indian Mines Department and the Revenue Department, the latter being entrusted with the work of collecting a royalty of 5 per cent on each pit month price. It was reported that the staff (one Mica Inspector and three assistants) was 'totally inadequate' even for grading of mica and collecting the royalty. The Inspector of Mines used to visit the site once in a year and would inspect only the working mines, not all. Even then many mine-owners would close down the mines, a month or two in advance, to avoid inspection. The other agencies connected with the mines were the Health Department, for inspecting sanitation conditions and the Police Department controlling the use of explosives. 'It is thus apparent that the work of inspecting and regulating mining activity is diffused over different unco-ordinated agencies, none of which are interested in the welfare of labour'.⁴³ Additionally, there were 'no signs of his (mine-owner's) willingness to re-invest even a portion of his profits from mica in actual working'.⁴⁴

Both women and children were overworked at very low wages and the Act never took account of that. Dubious accounts and payment records were maintained. No bonus or any such allowance was ever offered to the workers. Minimum safety and medical facilities were not provided according to the prescriptions of the Act. In many cases, even where the excavation was more than 20 feet deep and more than 50 persons were employed therein, it was not declared to be a mine under the Act and the mine-owner somehow succeeded in evading the law in this regard. Till 1948, the Factories Act did not apply to the mica processing and dressing units, on the grounds that there was no manufacturing activity going on. Sundays were observed unpaid holidays in violation of the rules.

Elsewhere in this paper we have referred to the fact that numerous individuals, even with very small sums, went ahead with mica mining but not all of them were successful. As far as the surface mining was concerned, those who struck rich pegmatites and could try various pits (which involved huge amount of money, of course) were the ones who made 'fortunes'. Deep underground mining was both more expensive and more yielding, which, however, remained the prerogatives of the richer class—naturally the rich agriculturists who were keen on expanding their sphere of investment activities.⁴⁵ Table 7 based on detailed descriptions of the 146 working mines in Nellore in 1944, clearly shows a pattern—the predominance of the Reddis. As high as 55 per cent of total mining leases was with them. Further, most of the large mining leases were under their control. The next in importance were the Komti Chettis and Chettiars who had secured about 23 per cent of the leases. The rest, mainly, Nayudus, Kammas and Muslims

⁴³ B.P. Adarkar, *Labour Conditions*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ *RCLE*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁴⁵ Dharma Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History*, p. 231.

were holding leases of a very small dimension. Even if one looks into the list of major mica exporters (who were also mostly mine-owners) the dominance of Reddis is quite evident. However, the issue of significance is not just the emergence of an imperious rural bourgeois class (landowners turned mine-owners), but the nature and direction of reinvestment of the surplus by this class. That such a class was emerging in the countryside of coastal Andhra during this period is obvious from the following observation: '...in Andhra (especially coastal) a small indigenous peasant-bourgeoisie-class was beginning to form and there existed a material and social basis for the emergence of a "future capitalist class".'⁴⁶ Most of the mine-owners (or, their successors) invested heavily in real estates like hotels, cinema halls, cinema-making and huge residential buildings mostly in the urban centres like Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Visakhapatnam and Madras. Even in the district itself the most affluent households still remain those who are/were in mica business.⁴⁷

Table 7

Caste-wise Distribution of Mining Leases, Nellore, 1944.

Area (Acres)	Castes		
	Reddis	Chettis & Chettars	Others
1-10	30	11	28
11-100	38	10	12
101-300	9	1	2
301-500	4	1	-
Total	81	23	42
	(55%)	(16%)	(29%)
Total No. of Mining Leases = 146			

Source: Compiled from B.C. Roy (1956), pp. 49-141.

Note: Bracketed figures are percentages to the total number of mining leases

The mica industry, however, was never developed in the region notwithstanding its vastness of raw materials and plentiful labour availability.

⁴⁶ A Satyanarayana, *Agrarian Relations Under the Impact of Colonial Rule in Madras Presidency, 1900-1940: A Case Study of the Andhra Districts*. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Heidelberg, 1983, (unpublished), pp 114-115. He also notes that 'It was not uncommon to find in Coastal Andhra, almost in every village, 'a few enterprising' Kammas and Reddis who were 'anxious to do some sort of business or the other'. Most of them were quite prepared to invest money and wait for returns. *Ibid.*, pp 113-114.

⁴⁷ This observation is based on author's acquaintance with some of the traditional mica dealers in the district

In 1930, before the Madras Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee it was suggested that:

One very important industry which can be opened is 'micanite industry' and mica dust industry. Large quantities of thin films are got from the mines. These are cheaply purchased by foreign markets and micanite is manufactured. There is no reason why steps should not be taken in this district and experts who have practical knowledge should not be employed and this industry encouraged. Then again, there is any amount of mica dust available. Nowadays fine powder of mica is sent out to India from Europe for lubricating and such like purposes. This can be done in this district. For both these, State-aid is very necessary and mica mine-owners must think on these lines also and bring into existence industries which will not only bring more money to them but also make the district more prosperous.⁴⁸

However, even by 1944 it was observed that, 'Mica mining is unfortunately still carried on mainly by laymen whose only aim is a quick return with the minimum of investment'.⁴⁹ And the number of mines declined to 65 in 1969 and to 45 after a decade. Presently the industry, both mining and manufacturing, is on its way to collapse. In 1983, after a century since mining began here, in a national workshop on mica, developing Nellore as a major centre for specialised mica manufacturing and promoting the mineral itself was still hoped for in despair.⁵⁰

The speculative and unstable structure of the industry was definitely the root cause of the failure to invest in mining techniques, in a trained work force and in downstream processes of fabrication. Such entrepreneurial callousness was, however, natural, not because the investible capital was scarce but the primarily trading interest of it, technical ignorance notwithstanding. In a situation where state support was not forthcoming to promote the industry in tune with the changing *nature* of the demand (favouring manufactured mica) and the world market was particularly dominated by the U.S., one did not question the short-term horizons of the local mine-owners.

Postscript

It is a 'sad paradox' that the mica industry of India, though of immense immediate and potential importance, after a century of its existence, is dying a slow death. In terms of output, number of mines and total employment

⁴⁸ Written evidence of M R Ry. K.V. Raghavachari, Nellore, in *The Madras Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, Vol II, Written Evidence* (hereafter MPBEC) (Calcutta, 1930), p. 65

⁴⁹ B.C. Roy 'Nellore Mica Belt', p. 19.

⁵⁰ Y M.K. Chandra Chowdary, 'Trend of Mica Exploitation in India', p. 13

there has been substantial declines during the last three decades or so. The employment has gone down from about 50,000 in 1970 to 4,222 in 1985.⁵¹ Mica's share in total mineral exports has fallen from the height of 39.5 per cent in 1951 to a meagre 1.1 per cent in 1984. Number of mines has declined from 780 in 1956 to 167 in 1985 (see Table 8). Even domestic consumption of mica has hardly shown any improvement over its very low base as in the sixties.⁵²

It is important to note here that since the mid-sixties, whereas the utilisation of sheet mica is constantly on the decline, the world demand for scrap and flakes (the basic raw material for manufactured mica) has been 'increasing rapidly' in diversifying field of application.⁵³ As such our external market had seriously been affected by the release of stock-piles by the USA and the subsequent development of synthetic substitutes.⁵⁴ Now,

Table 8

Mica Output, Number of Mines and Share in Mineral Exports in India, 1955-86

Year	Nellore	All India		
	Output ^a (tonnes)	Output ^a (tonnes)	No of Mines	Share in total Mineral Exports (%)
1955-59	5471*	28743*	780 (1956)	21.8 (1955)
1960-69	5960*	25588*	665 (1966)	15.5 (1960)
1970-75	4647*	14166*	543 (1970)	8.8 (1970)
1976-80	2685*	9089*	333 (1976)	4.4 (1976)
1981	2567	8375	294	3.2
1982	2917	8775	282	1.3
1983	2555	7504	217	1.3
1984	2073	6170	202	1.1
1985	1532	4942	167	na
1986 ^p	1480	4296	na	na

Source: Chandra Chowdary (1983), p. 14; and *IMY*, various issues.

Note: * Averages ^a Of crude mica.

na = Not available. ^p Provisional

⁵¹ S.K. Rajgarhia, 'Wanted—A Realistic Mica Policy', in *Workshop on Mica*, p. 68; and *Indian Minerals Yearbook* (hereafter *IMY*), 1983, Nagpur, 1986, p. 700

⁵² The annual average consumption during 1965-69 was 3,208 tonnes and the same was 2,670 tonnes during 1980-84. The figures are compiled from rather scattered and inadequate information given in certain issues of *IMY*.

⁵³ See *IMY, 1976 and 1977*, Nagpur, 1980, p. 460, and *IMY, 1986, Vol. 2*, Nagpur, 1988, p. 690. It has been observed that the demand for the mineral from the industrialising countries would rise significantly in future. Y.M.K. Chandra Chowdary, 'Trend of Mica Exploitation in India and its Impact on the Mica Industry', *Workshop on Mica*, Patna, 1983, p. 12.

⁵⁴ See A.M.N. Ghosh, 'Mica', *Records of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. 90, 1962, p. 317, and 'A Report', *Indian Minerals*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1948, p. 266

incidentally, the USA has emerged as the leading supplier of scrap and flakes as also manufactured mica. And Indian exports (5-yearly averages, in thousand tonnes) of scrap and flakes have fallen from 15.4 per cent during 1970–74 to 12.6 during 1975–79 and further to 9.8 per cent during 1980–84 period.

The case for establishing units for manufactured mica (micanite, wet ground mica, glass bonded mica, micronised mica powder, refractory mica bricks, mica paper, etc.) is also based on very strong reasons of fetching a much higher value in the international market. For instance, the wet ground mica fetches three times the value of dry ground mica and five times that of scrap. Mica paper sells at about ten times the value of scrap. Whereas the average values of unmanufactured films and splittings are only Rs. 1.48 lakh and Rs. 9,000 per tonne respectively, the corresponding average values of the manufactured products, manufactured condenser films and micanite are Rs. 2.80 lakh and Rs. 1.16 lakh per tonne.⁵⁵

What, however, has happened is contrary to the expected norms. The rapid decrease both in the number of mines and production therefrom has resulted in a situation which 'may lead to a virtual collapse of the industry'⁵⁶ (see Table 8). Even though detailed recommendations were made by the Mica Enquiry Committee (1946) to develop this industry on a sound national mica policy,⁵⁷ no steps have been taken till date to establish major mica-based industries, excepting the formation of a Mica Export Promotion Council, the export policy of which has been severely criticised by all concerned,⁵⁸ which obliges the producers to share the exports on a 50–50 basis (between the Mica Trading Corporation (MITCO.) and the private traders).

As far as the mica industry in Nellore is concerned it was hoped that it would 'continue to be in demand and, under improved mining and marketing conditions, could doubtless obtain a greater share of the world's trade'.⁵⁹ However, the industry never flourished. In 1984 it was reported that 'at

⁵⁵ N.P. Chaudhuri, *Mica*, Discussion paper at IIM, Calcutta, 1976, p. 8. (mimeo)

⁵⁶ Y.M.K. Chandra Chowdary, 'Trend of Mica Exploitation in India', p. 12. Also see, M.C. Basu, 'Mica, Sick Child of Indian Mineral Industry', *Commerce*, Annual No. 1976, who advocates 'serious R & D effort' to boost manufactured mica production for both exports and domestic consumption, in order to save the industry from the chronic sickness, pp. 223–224.

⁵⁷ *RMEC, op. cit.*, pp. 109–120. For a note on the Proposed Mica Syndicate, see, pp. 129–133.

⁵⁸ For details of the problems involved, see S.K. Rajgarhia, 'A Realistic Mica Policy', pp. 68–73; S.K. Rajgarhia, 'Mica Can Survive Provided . . .', in *Workshop on Mica*, pp. 74–79; A. Rai, 'Mica Slipping into History Books', *Business India*, No. 73, December-January, 1980–81, pp. 63–67; A. Sinha, 'Mica Industry Profitable Stagnation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18 June 1977, pp. 977–978; A. Sinha, 'Mica Industry: Unbroken Grip of Monopoly', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 June 1977, p. 1015; R.K. Sinha, *Mica*, Discussion paper at IIM, Calcutta, 1976, pp. 28–29 (mimeo), and *Economic Times*, 12 November 1980.

⁵⁹ A.K. Dey, 'A Sketch of the Mineral Wealth of the Andhra State', *Indian Minerals*, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1953, p. 185.

present the industry is in crisis and most of the small mines are fast disappearing.... There is need to revive the closed mines in this area. State must enter in a big way to save this declining industry'.⁶⁰ High degree of exploitation of labour, especially of women and children, who constitute a sizeable proportion in the labour force, is still prevalent and practically no notable changes have been made in terms of mining and prospecting methods.⁶¹ It has been observed that 'regulatory measures enacted by the State and Central Governments for streamlining the industry served more as a deterrent than as a tool for its promotion.' Unfair pricing policies of MITCO and state inaction in establishing mica-based industries are practically ruining the enterprise.⁶²

⁶⁰ G. Saibaba, *Labour Conditions in the Mining Industry in Andhra Pradesh*, Tirupati, 1984, p. 87

⁶¹ See *Indian Labour Gazette*, Vol. XI, No. 12, 1954, pp. 1127-1137, and also G Saibaba, *Labour Conditions*, pp 88-101. The latter is a more detailed and revealing study on the labour conditions

⁶² For details, see the report 'A P Mica Mines in the Doldrums', *The Hindu*, 19 September 1991

The making of the Congress muslim stereotype: Bihar, 1937–39

Papiya Ghosh

Patna Women's College

Part of a wider study of the political perspectives that metamorphosed between the twenties and the forties, this paper traces the beginnings of what became the stereotypical Muslim League 'view of the Congress Muslims'¹ to the aftermath of the 1917 Shahabad riot. It is argued that in the late 1930s this view became a mobilisational bottom line of the League.

However, as we shall see, a mere reconstruction of the making of the League's view is misleading. The Congress Muslims were neither mute, nor acquiescent nor unaware of a credibility on the descent. The reservations that the provincial Jamiat² and leading Congressmen like Syed Mahmud had about the Congress, correct the League's stereotype but also provides a crucial insight into the context in which the Muslim League was to make its breakthrough in Bihar, even as the Congress continued to exhort Muslims to make sacrifices for the freedom struggle.

In 1913, when Mazharul Haque remarked, 'the anti-Congress Musalman is fast becoming an extinct species and will soon have to be searched for in

¹ The term Congress Muslim has been used as in Mushurul Hasan, "'Congress Muslims'" and Indian Nationalism: Dilemma and Decline, 1928–34', Occasional Papers on History and Society, No. XXIII, April 1985, NMML, pp 11–12. Hasan has used the term to describe the 'many Muslim groups that were connected with the Congress at various levels' and had a 'pro-Congress' thrust in regard to the community and country.

² The support of the Jamiat was crucial to the Congress in enlisting support among the Muslims. See Mukul Kesavan, '1937 As a Landmark in the Course of Communal Politics in the UP', Occasional Papers, No. XI, November 1988, NMML, p 19, for the comment that the Congress always recruited Muslims at one remove and in the 1930s and 40s it relied not so much on Muslim Congressmen as upon organisations such as the Jamiat

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some archaeological museum',³ he was obviously unaware of the extent to which his optimism would be rocked by the Shahabad riot of 1917.

In the aftermath of the riot both the Lucknow Pact and the Home Rule movement evoked suspicion among the Bihari Muslims who contemplated reconsidering their political togetherness with the Hindus (in Congress). Haque's prompt denial of the involvement of Home Rule workers in Shahabad and the fact that his report on the riot was dismissive of the allegations of rape and defilement of mosques, alienated the Muslims considerably.⁴

Barely a week after the Shahabad riot a meeting about 6-7,000 strong, denounced the politics of Mazharul Haque, Hasan Iman, Sarfaraz Husain Khan and Jinnah and resolved that they did not represent the Shahabad Muslims.⁵ The theme of almost every anti-Home Rule meeting organised thereafter by the Muslims all over Bihar, was that Home Rule would be fatal to the interests of the Muslims, that the representative character of their 'so-called' leaders was questionable and that the popular views of the community had not been ascertained by the leaders who seemed completely subordinate to the Congress. There was outrage that the campaign for Home Rule was being carried on even after the attack on the Shahabad Muslims. Home Rule, it was feared, would mark the end of religious liberty and even compel migration to 'some other country'.⁶

Notwithstanding the alienation of the Muslims over the calling off of the Non-Cooperation movement, at the level of electoral politics, in 1926, it was 'only in Bihar' that the picture of the shrinking Congress support among the Muslims was relieved. This was attributed to some indefatigable electioneering in bullock-carts and knee-deep waters by Shafi Daudi. In the wake of M.M. Malaviya's electioneering activities, Daudi worked hard to prevent the alienation of the Muslim Congressmen and six of the 14 Swarajist Muslims who stood for 18 seats were elected.⁷

However, two years later, the Nehru Report split the provincial Congress Muslim leadership with Syed Mahmud for, and Shafi Daudi against it. The Bihar All Parties Muslim Conference condemned the Nehru Report as

³ Janet M. Rizvi, 'Muslim Politics and Government Policy. Studies in the Development of Muslim Organisation and its Social Background in North India and Bengal, 1885-1917', Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1969, p. 396.

⁴ Q. Ahmed and J. S. Jha, *Mazharul Haque*, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 76-77.

⁵ Political Department, Special Section (hereafter PS) 203/1917.

⁶ Abstract of Police Intelligence, 6 November 1917. Also see other entries of November and December 1917 and PS 203/1917. Peter Robb, 'Some Aspects of British Policy Towards Indian Nationalism 1885-1920' in Mike Shepperdson and Colin Simmons, eds, *The Indian National Congress and the Political Economy of India, 1885-1985*, Aldershot, 1988, p. 71, notes that the Shahabad riot ensured that no prominent Bihari Muslim saw it fit to address the 1917 Congress, as well as the anti-Home Rule meetings in Bihar.

⁷ David Page, *Prelude to Partition*, Delhi, 1982, p. 138. 'These were almost the only Muslims returned on the Congress ticket throughout north India'

favouring the Hindu Mahasabha.⁸ The Muslim Conference formed in 1928, with Shafi Daudi as its all-India working secretary, supported separate electorates and a federal system. Though its impact on Bihar was limited, as in the other Muslim minority provinces, the Muslim Conference had considerable passive support.⁹ Later, in 1931, Daudi denounced the Lucknow Conference of Nationalist Muslims. He saw 'no other reason but a peculiar mentality to please the rising sun' in its opposition to separate electorates.¹⁰

Syed Mahmud and Abdul Bari were both closely associated with the Muslim Nationalist Party (MNP) which was formed in July 1929 to organise support for the Congress in general, and the Nehru Report in particular.¹¹ The party proved an ineffective alternative to the Muslim Conference and the Muslim League and split into several factions by 1934. Though it served as a platform for 'nationalist groups' such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the All India Momin Conference, Ahrars and Khudai Khidmatgars, it was unable to extend its base outside Congress circles.¹²

Between May and June 1931, the MNP organised branches in no less than 12 out of the 16 Bihar districts.¹³ But the 'drawback' that the Congress Muslims in general were to suffer from, was that 'somehow' their image had got 'indissolubly linked with that of the Hindus' and they came to be seen as 'renegades' who had sold their souls. There was surprisingly no attempt made to remove this impression.¹⁴

Meanwhile in 1930 both the All India Muslim Conference (in March) and the Bihar Provincial Muslim League (in June) opposed Muslims joining the Civil Disobedience Movement.¹⁵ However, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Bihar supported their participation in the agitation.¹⁶ On its part, the Bihar Congress which had been doleful about its shrinking support among the Muslims in the late 1920s, merely attempted a hesitant mobilisation among them during the agitation.¹⁷

It was the low participation of Muslims in the Civil Disobedience Movement that became the focus of Abdul Bari's ire against non-Congress and apolitical Muslims. His diagnosis of the 'difficulty' in Hindu-Muslim unity

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 184, 187

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 199

¹⁰ *The Indian Nation*, 25 April 1931.

¹¹ Hasan, 'Congress Muslims', pp. 21–22

¹² *Ibid.*, pp 35, 37 and 40

¹³ *The Indian Nation*, 14 June 1931

¹⁴ Hasan, 'Congress Muslims', pp. 37–38.

¹⁵ Md. Muzaffar Imam, *Role of Muslims in the National Movement, 1912–1930 (A Study of Bihar)*, Delhi, 1987, pp 221–222

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 216–217 and 224

¹⁷ See Papiya Ghosh, 'The Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar, 1930–34', Ph D thesis, Delhi University, 1984, chs 1 and 2

was in their being 'backward in politics'. For a 37 lakh population anything less than 15,000 Muslims in jail was unacceptable to him.¹⁸

Briefly put, the roots of opposing stands regarding constitutional safeguards for Muslims and their participation in Congress agitations lay in the decade before the ministry period. How these trends crystallised in the period in focus will be taken up shortly. But before that an outline of the political spectrum.

K.B. Ismail, the one-time president of the Patna branch of the MNP,¹⁹ summed up the 1937 scenario to Rajendra Prasad as follows. 'The whole Muslim community [in Bihar] except only about 5%' was 'somehow' against the Congress.²⁰ Ismail's estimate though sweeping, indicates that there had been an unmistakable shift away from the Congress to parties that emerged as alternatives to the Congress in 1936-37.

The Muslim League did not contest the 1937 election in Bihar. However, five of the 56 members that Jinnah announced as comprising the central parliamentary board were Biharis. They included Abdul Aziz who later organised the Muslim United Party (MUP) to fight the election. Neither the MUP nor the Ahrar party in Bihar, joined the Muslim League before the election.²¹

The Muslim Independent Party (MIP) had the support of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, whose provincial president, Maulana Abul Mohsin Mohammed Sajjad was its president. Sajjad, who presided over the first session of the party on 12 September 1936, was also the naib amir of the Imarat-i-Shariah, a legal institution set up in 1921 at the initiative of the ulema. Projected as a party for the emancipation of the poor and the uplift of agriculture, the MIP supported the Congress goal of independence but aimed at securing constitutional safeguards for religion and culture. Only those members who agreed to consult the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and Imarat-i-Shariah on religious matters received electoral support from the party.²²

While the origin of the MUP was traced to an informal meeting in July 1935, its first session was held only on 3 December 1936. Summed up as a provincial substitute for what was described as the ineffectiveness of both

¹⁸ *The Indian Nation*, 5 May 1931, speech at a meeting in Samastipur. Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, Cambridge, 1977, p. 124 mentions that by 15 November 1930, out of a total of 6,323 civil disobedience prisoners in Bihar only 37 were Muslims.

¹⁹ *The Indian Nation*, 19 May 1931.

²⁰ Patna City, 8 October 1937, in V. Choudhary, ed., *Dr Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents* (hereafter RPCD), New Delhi, 1984, Vol. I, p. 107.

²¹ Z.H. Zaidi, 'Aspects of the Development of the Muslim League Policy, 1937-1947', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wamwright, eds., *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-47*, London, 1970, p. 247. The Muslim League parliamentary board was announced on 21 May 1936.

²² A.M. Zaidi, ed., *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India*, New Delhi, 1978, Vol. IV, pp. 638-639.

the Muslim League and the Muslim Conference,²³ its programme was more vocal than the League's in demanding recognition of and safeguards for the rights of the Muslims as a distinct political entity.²⁴

In 1937, of the 40 Muslim seats in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, the MIP won 15, the MUP six and the Ahrar three. The Congress won five of the seven Muslim seats it contested.²⁵ Much after the elections, it was in October 1937 that the MUP and the Ahrars merged with the Muslim League. The MIP merely resolved in December 1937, to collaborate with the League.²⁶ Meanwhile M. Yunus, the leader of the MIP formed an interim ministry between 1 April and 19 July 1937.²⁷

The Congress with 98 out of 152 seats in the Legislative Assembly,²⁸ formed a ministry on 20 July 1937. During its tenure of two years, Congress Muslims, from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to Syed Mahmud and Abdul Bari and the Congress ulemas and Momins were closely monitored and stigmatised by the Muslim League for supporting the Hindu Raj of Congress by failing to give priority to the *mazhab*.

Thus Azad's statement that the Congress need for a lawyer (Baldev Sahay) who appreciated its view point explained its request to Sultan Ahmed to resign from the post of Advocate General drew much derision. A. Ahsan, secretary of the Munger Muslim League wrote to Azad that he had allowed himself 'to be used as a tool of the Congress'. It was pointedly added that the dismissal of Sultan Ahmed had been condemned in no less than three dozen meetings all over Bihar as it was a blatant case of discrimination against the Muslims.²⁹

Maulana Azad's challenge to Fazlul Haq to prove that Muslims were being oppressed in Congress-ruled provinces was seen as proof of Congress Muslims having become too 'accustomed' to seeing things from Congress-Hindu glasses.³⁰ So 'blurred' had his political vision become that he was blind to the atrocities that were being perpetrated on Muslims day in and day out. The sum of the lecture by the Saran District Muslim League's joint secretary at the Chapra juma mosque was that Azad was anti-Islam. His compilation of the *tafsir* of the Quran in which he equated the Quran and

²³ *Ibid.*, pp 640-643

²⁴ Z H. Zaidi, 'Muslim League Policy', p 247.

²⁵ G McDonald, 'Bihar Polity 1908-37: The Bihar Congress and the Political Development of the region', Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Australia, 1978, p 412; Sulekha Das, *Congress At The Helm (Bihar 1937-1939)*, New Delhi, 1986, p 13

²⁶ *The Searchlight*, 18 January 1938.

²⁷ Asghar Imam Falsafi, *Mr Mohammed Yunus Ke Daure Wazarat Ka Ek Aks*, Patna, 1987, p. 6.

²⁸ McDonald, 'Bihar Polity', p. 412.

²⁹ *Star of India*, 30 November 1937 The editorial of 7 December 1937 remarked that faced with a storm of protest, the Congress ministers of Bihar requested the services of their 'ever obedient vassal', Azad.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7 February 1938. Open letter, M. Ali Husain—Azad



the Gita and Mecca and Kashi, disqualified him from leading Id prayers or for that matter, any prayer of true Muslims. Resolutions to this effect were passed in approval of the Calcutta Muslim League decision to remove Maulana Azad from the Imamat of Id prayers. Similar resolutions were passed in other Chapra mosques, in Siwan,³¹ and in a Bhagalpur District Muslim League Id jamat.³² The Bhagalpur district Jamiat-ul-Momineen (allied to the Muslim League) described him as anti-Islam and a menace to Muslim solidarity.³³

Ironically while the fact that S.K. Sinha and not Syed Mahmud was made premier, was to remain a staple proof of the Congress ministry having started a Hindu Raj, Syed Mahmud's credibility in the Muslim League circles was abysmally low. His attending a debating society function at Patna College despite the resignation of Muslim students in protest of their non-representation on its executive committee, was read as an index of his indifference to the oppression of Muslims in Gaya and Patna districts.³⁴

At the Gaya district Muslim League's request,³⁵ its president, Muhammad Ashique Warsi addressed a lengthy letter of outrage to Syed Mahmud when he denied Fazlul Haq's charges of the oppression of Muslims in Bihar,

*If you would have taken exception as a Congressman to Haq's speech your statement would probably have passed unchallenged as one of the so many (sic) onslaughts by the Congressites on Muslim language and culture, but the sting lies in your professing also to speak as a Muslim.... Ignorance on the part of the gentleman who was quam personified at one time is deplorable and shameful (emphasis added).*³⁶

Mahmud's ignorance was treated as all too easy to see through. A poser that rated him even lower was as follows '...after all what have you done as a Muslim for the advancement of the Muslim cause in this province? Surely there is nothing to your credit on the account.'³⁷

Syed Mahmud was also held responsible for the removal of the 'only Muslim Advocate General in the whole of India'. The Muslims, he was informed, were not going to renounce their religion to join the Bande

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23 November 1938.

³² *Ibid.*, 22 November 1938.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3 December 1938

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 31 August 1937

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 August 1937.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 August 1937. For Syed Mahmud's benefit Warsi catalogued the oppressions thus: Loot of houses in Nawada and Arrah. Riots in Deo, Madanpur, Gaya, Bhui, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Aurangabad

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Mataram chorus. Nor were they going to trust him as he had revealed his true colours in refuting Haq who was true word for word.³⁸

Congress Muslims who attempted a critique of the Congress in order to correct representational imbalances within the party also became the objects of the League's contempt. What follows is a case in point. The Shahabad branch of the Radical Muslim Party (presumably an offshoot of the Socialist Party) in an address to Rajendra Prasad on one occasion pointed out that the Muslims could not enter the Congress in large numbers because 'party feelings' had entered Congress committees. To ensure that Muslim claims were not overlooked in the Congress committees they suggested that some seats be fixed for them. Also that Muslim claims should not be ignored in government services. To this Rajendra Prasad replied that the primary focus should be on the freedom struggle and not on making demands. The *Star of India* comment which follows is representative of the League's reaction to such initiatives. 'These Congressite Muslims by praying and sending petitions to Congress are only humiliating the great Muslim community and disgracing the self-respect of the followers of Islam'.³⁹

Likewise Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman on a tour of Bihar had criticised the Congress ulemas for advising Muslims to join the Congress with a view to fighting from within, as the strategy had been belied by the past experience of Muslims.⁴⁰ That no Muslim should continue to be a member of the Congress and that those who did not quit were not to be regarded as representatives of the Muslim nation became a constant theme of the League's mobilisation efforts.⁴¹

It was also underlined that if important leaders like Jinnah had dropped out of the Congress after long years of association, surely there was a message in it for all Muslims, which was not to be missed. If other Muslims had not followed suit it was because they were so completely absorbed by the Congress that it would take time for them to cut loose. Once the League grew in strength they would automatically gravitate to the League and realise that it had been right all along.⁴²

Campaigning for the Muslim League, Maulana Qamar of Darbhanga once remarked that it was the 'small groups of Muslims' still in the Congress who gave it the chance to claim Muslim support. Those Muslims should have left the Congress and have nothing to do with it till it became a national

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 September 1937, reports a resolution passed by the Darbhanga Muslim League in this context, to the effect that Syed Mahmud did not represent the Muslims and they had no confidence in him.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 July 1939.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1938.

⁴¹ For example Abdul Aziz See KW PS 473/1939, Ranchi District Muslim League, 11 October 1939, Camp Ranchi, 13 October 1939, Reporter Inspectors SB CID.

⁴² *Ibid.* and Mahfuzul Haque in the same file, Ranchi District Muslim League, 11 October 1939, Camp Ranchi, 13 October 1939, Reporter Inspectors, SB CID

body in the true sense.⁴³ The general secretary of the Munger district Muslim Students' Federation cautioned students by describing Congress as *Vishkanya*, the mythical poison bride. Fatal and deadly to the corporate entity of the Muslims, it was to be stayed clear of. For what was the guarantee that the Constituent Assembly which the Congress wanted would safeguard Muslim interests?⁴⁴

Part of the Muslim League's portrayal of the political lives of Muslims in the Congress was based on the evidence of Congress drop-outs. Shortly after the Congress ministry took over in Bihar, several Muslims switched their affiliation from the Congress to the League in Bhagalpur, Munger, Arrah and Gaya, as Shah Muhammad Qasim noted in his resignation letter to the Gaya District Congress Committee (DCC). Qasim had been in the Congress for 20 years, was an influential pir, a zamindar and an advocate of the *Imarat-i-Shariah*. He advised his friends and supporters to leave the Congress because, he wrote, it was forcing Hindu culture and language in disregard of the serious objections made known to the Congress by the *Imarat-i-Shariah* and the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema*. It was a 'painful surprise' to him that despite the spate of resignations, the Congress committees concerned were rigidly indifferent to Muslim grievances such as the marginalisation of Congress Muslims of the calibre of Shah Omair of Gaya in the Congress set-up.⁴⁵

Another Gaya Congressman, Dr. S. Qamruddin, who had been a Congress dictator in 1920, specified the increasing instances of communalism as justification for his resignation. Congress, it seemed to him, had become another name for the Hindu Mahasabha. 'To discuss and enumerate its acts of communalism' required 'a book, at least booklet'.⁴⁶ It was an 'unparalleled instance of communalism' that Congress was ready to 'give Muslims anything but power' or at best to offer 'position without power'. The case in question was that of Shah Omair's. A veteran Congressman, Omair had made many sacrifices and also had the distinction of constructing an ideal village, Omairabad, which had received credit from leaders like Azad. When he lost the election in 1937 he was not nominated by Congress to the Legislative Council. He was only made chairman of the Gaya municipality and his powers reduced soon after. Moreover the only Muslim among the 7 Gaya DCC members was merely a powerless second Vice President. All this seemed to him as nothing short of 'a sort of Neo Khan Bahadurism in the Congress'.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Maulana Qamar of Darbhanga, Ranchi District Muslim League, 12 October 1939, Camp Ranchi, 14 October 1939, Reporter Inspectors, SB CID

⁴⁴ *Star of India*, 8 December 1937.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 October 1938

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 September 1938

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* The circumstances in which Omair's powers were reduced could not be located

Thus the 'bad treatment' of a veteran like Shah Muhammad Omair by the Congress was seen as an eye-opener by the Muslim Congressmen who lost 'all faith in the bona fide of the Congress' which seemed intent on establishing Hindu Raj.⁴⁸ About 16 prominent Gaya Congress Muslims sent a memorial to Subhas Bose, the Congress President, mentioning that Omair's case was an indication that Muslim Congressmen were not 'required' any more and there had therefore been about a dozen resignations in Gaya district alone. Had Shah Omair himself not controlled the situation, 'many more would have followed suit'.⁴⁹

On his part Shah Omair in a letter to Rajendra Prasad attributed the 'rapid progress of the Muslim League activities at least in one district' (his), more due to the Kisan Sabha 'than anything else', and the disharmony created in the way of 'Musalman petty zamindars'. The going became tough for Shah Omair because of the overlapping Kisan Sabha–Congress membership in Gaya, especially in Jehanabad subdivision. Otherwise he felt, Congress could have been very safely defended.⁵⁰

It was evidence from Muslim Congressmen against the Congress that the Muslim League drew the maximum mileage from. This was true of the drop-outs detailed above, and with regard to the statements made by Muslim Congressmen about the Bhagalpur riot of July 1938, over a Rath Yatra procession.

In Bhagalpur the statement of Maulvi Abdul Hamid Reshmi, secretary, Congress Muslim Mass Contact Committee (MMCC) alleged that many of the district Congress leaders who were also office bearers of the Hindu Mahasabha had played a distinctly communal role during the Bhagalpur riot. This was investigated and found to be true by an enquiry made by Jamil Ahmad Khan and Syed Kasim Hussain, Congress municipal commissioners and unanimously accepted by the working committee of the Bhagalpur MMCC.⁵¹

It was the fact that 'responsible' Congress Muslims themselves had established the Congress–Hindu Mahasabha nexus that was underlined by each of the three Muslim League reports that indicted the Bihar Congress for having unleashed a Hindu Raj. These were the Pirpur Report, Fazlul Haq's *Muslim Sufferings Under Congress Rule* and both parts of the Shareef Report.⁵² The *Star of India* editorialised what was meant to be its pertinent

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 September 1938, Syed Ali Manzar, Shah Manzoor Asdaq, Md Fazlur Rahman and Ahsan Akhlat—president, Gaya DCC

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 October 1938; 28 October 1938 reports two Congress Muslims resigning and justifying their action in view of the increasing oppression of Muslims. The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign, they wrote to the president, Gaya DCC, was a movement of Muslim Mass Suicide.

⁵⁰ Arwal, December (n.d.), 1937 in *RPCD*, Vol. I. pp 310–11.

⁵¹ Based on AICC G-22/1938.

⁵² K K Aziz, ed., *Muslims Under Congress Rule, 1937–39—A Documentary Record*, Delhi, 1986, pp 349, 397, 514–18; *Star of India*, 26 April 1939.

surprise at how 'any Muslim worth the name' could continue to be in Congress after Bhagalpur'.⁵³

The outspokenness of the Bhagalpur Congress Muslims who were MMCC members was obviously seen by the Muslim League as an atypical emulation. On the whole, however, the Muslim Mass Contact campaign, which in Bihar had enrolled about 25,000 Muslims by November 1937, left the Congress Muslims open to charges of dividing the Muslim community.

Thus it was the 'dissensions' that were being attempted in the 'oneness of Muslims' by Congress 'hirelings' that made Maulana Qumar, a one-time Congress supporter emerge from his self-imposed retirement in order to rally round the League.⁵⁴ The Muslim Mass Contact movement was widely portrayed as nothing but a Congress instrument for splitting the Muslims. Why else the special favour to Muslims, was the usual poser.⁵⁵ Maulana Muhammad Abbas put it more strongly in a speech in Dalsinghsarai. Some members of the legislature, he said, tempted by posts of ministers and at the instance of the Congress were party to working for the complete annihilation of the Muslim community.⁵⁶ The Muslim Mass Contact programme, nicknamed the Muslim Massacre Committee, was also seen as a Congress attempt to appropriate Shia support and thus duplicate the 'Lucknow tragedy' of Shia-Sunni tension in Bihar.⁵⁷ It was also viewed as a move to detach the Momins from the rest of the community. But more of that later.

For the Muslim League the key to what it considered to be the stereotypical attitude of Congress Muslims to community questions lay in the all explanatory 'bread and butter' factor. Thus Fazlul Haq's reaction to Syed Mahmud's denial of his charges of the oppression of Bihari Muslims was as follows. 'Dr Syed Mahmud says that he does not know of any oppression of Muslims in Bihar. It is not surprising that he does not know. Those whose bread depends on the sufferance of the Congress must naturally be blind to the faults of the Congress.'⁵⁸ Likewise Mahfuzul Haque remarked at a Ranchi district Muslim League meet that Islam and truth were being sacrificed for a few gold coins. Those who repeated the Congress like loudspeakers were called patriots and those who did not were called reactionaries.⁵⁹ The Shareef Report summed up that only those Muslims 'who were either untruthful or had sold their conscience and pretended affiliation to the Congress were

⁵³ *Star of India*, 31 August 1938.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 13 December 1937, speech at Manjarpur, Darbhanga.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 6 June 1938, Mehdi Hasan, secretary, Bihar subdivisional Muslim League's annual report is an example

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 10 August 1938

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 22 June 1938 Also see 17 April 1939

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 21 August 1937

⁵⁹ KW PS 473/1939, Ranchi District Muslim League, 11 October 1939, Camp Ranchi, 13 October 1939, Reporter Inspectors, SB CID

appointed to the Rural Development Department, and perhaps other departments as well.⁶⁰

The Congress Muslim, it was constantly underlined, did not articulate concern for the Muslim community. For, as Abdul Aziz, the Bihar Muslim League president put it, the lips of the few Muslims who joined the Congress were sealed. They could not speak out the truth against the Congress even when palpable wrongs were committed by the Congress against their co-religionists. It seemed to him as though they had signed pledges to be silent even when Congress policies were injurious to themselves or their brethren.⁶¹ Thus when the Congress Muslims did not speak out against the one and a half month long social boycott of Muslims over a controversial Mahabir Jhanda procession in Bagaha, in the Champaran district, Abdul Aziz made a telling remark. He was certain that the boycott would trouble the Hindu ministers and officers, though it might not perhaps, cause concern to the Muslim Congressmen who had characteristically trivialised the sufferings of the Bagaha Muslims.⁶²

In the eyes of both the Muslim League and the MIP, association with the Congress had metamorphosed some Muslims to a contemptible degree. The Shareef Report referred to Syed Mahmud, 'the misguided Muslim minister', describing Gandhi as 'an incarnation of Vishnu' at the Tripuri Congress.⁶³ There was horror about some Congress Muslims having adopted *namaste* as a form of greeting⁶⁴ and wearing Gandhi caps.⁶⁵

In the course of a Legislative Assembly debate Abdul Bari once made a remark to the effect that the MIP had won its seats only on the steam of pir and mauvi support.⁶⁶ This provoked Abdul Jalil to retort that Bari seemed to have forgotten that the Congress too had enlisted the help of the ulema in Saran and Champaran. Perhaps, Bari did not need ulemas in this world or even the Prophet on the day of judgement. That was only understandable for '*...unki chandan, bel patte aur phool ki arthi ki jaegi aur Kashi jal se snan karakar seedha Baikunth padharay jayengay....*'⁶⁷ The Congress Muslim was thus not subject to contempt only from the Muslim League.

⁶⁰ K K. Aziz, *Muslims under Congress Rule*, pp 441–42

⁶¹ *Star of India*, 22 July 1938, speech at an Arrah Muslim League meeting.

⁶² KW PS 473/1939, Ranchi District Muslim League, 11 October 1939, Camp Ranchi, 13 October 1939, Reporter Inspectors, SB CID; also see *Asre Jadid* cutting of 13 February 1939, 'Majhau ki Muslims ki Giraftari' in PS 96(II)/1939 which wondered if Syed Mahmud who was always dismissive of Muslim complaints would look into the Majhau riot case

⁶³ K K. Aziz, *Muslims under Congress Rule*, p 434.

⁶⁴ KW PS 473/1939 Mahfuzul Haq at Ranchi District Muslim League meeting, 11 October 1939, Camp Ranchi, 13 October 1939, Reporter Inspectors, SB CID.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Abdul Aziz's speech

⁶⁶ *Bihar Legislative Assembly Debates* (hereafter *BLAD*) (Patna, 1937), 6 September 1937, pp 711, 713. I am grateful to Raza Sami for translating the Urdu passages.

⁶⁷ *BLAD* (Patna, 1937), 7 September 1937, p 741.

But it was the Muslim League in particular that held forth about the Congress ulema and Congress Momins. Spawned by the mobilisation efforts of the Congress, both these terms came to acquire almost the same set of stigmas associated with Muslims who were members of the Congress. These stereotypes were given currency in the League's mosque meetings, from the platform and in the press. A report on the Bihar Jamiat-ul-Ulema Conference in the *Star of India*, the reading of which newspaper was specifically recommended in several League meetings,⁶⁸ will explain the point. The meeting at Chapra, it was reported, was held in a *pandal* with the Congress flag flying over it. Delegates were escorted to the *pandal* by the Congress Hindus and Arya Samajists who took a leading part in the function and comprised 90 per cent of the 600 odd who attended the meeting. The Muslim League was abused and Muslims asked to join the Congress. A total of about 2,000 rupees was spent on the session by the Congress. But the behaviour of the so-called ulemas had only resulted in spurring Muslim League activism.⁶⁹

The message that pirs who dissuaded Muslims from joining the League were not to be heeded was commonplace.⁷⁰ When the Congress started the Rural Development Department, the Bihar Muslim League's Publicity Officer thought it fit to issue a statement warning Muslims to meet the challenge of the Congress propaganda that was inevitable once the kith and kin of the Congress Maulanas bagged most of the appointments that would be made by the Department.⁷¹

Within the Muslim League and Latifur Rahman's (AIML member) Jamiat-ul-Momineen there was much derision for Abdul Qaiyum Ansari and his Jamiat-ul-Momineen, which was seen as a Congress hothouse plant, a bogus substitute for the MMCP which had flopped in 1937. The Congress, it was pointed out, did not in fact trust the Congressite Momins as was evident from their having arranged for a Syed (Nasim Gorganvi) 'to control' Momin affairs.⁷²

Contempt for Ansari was expressed along the following lines. It was only after his ignominious defeat in the Patna City by-election by Jafar Iman of the Muslim League, that he had started espousing the Momin cause. He had for example, watched in silence when Momins were killed, injured and

⁶⁸ See for example *Star of India*, 3, 16, 19 November 1937, for reports of meetings in Danapur, Gilani and Phulwarisharif respectively.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1938

⁷⁰ PS 88/1938, 'Muslim League meeting outside Dhatta Fair, Forbesganj, Purnea on 6 November 1938'. The speech made by Maulvi Shah Husan Mian of Phulwarisharif to mobilise support for the AIML Conference scheduled to be held in Patna in December 1938, is an example.

⁷¹ *Star of India*, 28 July 1939

⁷² *Ibid.*, 22 December 1938 and 17 July 1939

beaten during riots at Tanda, Bhagalpur, Amingaon, Jamui, Majhaul and Tilokri, because he feared his Congress masters.⁷³

Ansari's Jamiat-ul-Momineen, however, repeated at almost every meeting that the Muslim League seemed determined to crush the Momin movement as it had exposed the selfishness of its leaders, who being upper class Muslims, were unprepared to support the uplift of the Momins.⁷⁴ Instances of the oppression of Momins by Muslim landlords were also quoted to prove the point.⁷⁵

Though the Congress Momins, as A.Q. Ansari's Jamiat-ul-Momineen members came to be called, were promised all support by the Congress ministry,⁷⁶ to begin with, it was repeatedly given out in their meetings that the Momins were neither to align themselves with the Congress nor with the League, but to stand on their own feet.⁷⁷ Nor were relations between the Congress and the Congress Momins what they were projected to be, as their subsequent demands of the Congress would indicate. These included ministerial berths, reservation of seats in the legislature,⁷⁸ as well as the accommodation of unemployed Momins in the government departments that had ignored their claims.⁷⁹

That the equation between the Bihar Jamiat-ul-Ulema and the Congress was not what the League's stereotype communicated is also evident. Though the Jamiat continued its political support to the Congress,⁸⁰ from time to time it reiterated its criticism about the encroachment of Muslim rights. This is evident from its working committee resolutions passed in October 1938. Its main objection was to the Wardha scheme curriculum and the preaching of 'a particular religion and ideal' through the Rural Development scheme.⁸¹

But it is a note that Sajjad, naib amir, Imarat-i-Shaiah, president of the Bihar Jamiat-ul-Ulema and of the MIP, prepared for the Congress Working Committee (CWC) after the Congress ministry's resignation that provides significant insights into the 'genuine and sincere aversion for the Congress'

⁷³ *Ibid*, 26 September 1938, article by Md Ishaque Husain Ansari of Gaya

⁷⁴ *The Searchlight*, 18 December 1938 (Giridih), 25 December 1939 (Jehanabad), 14 March 1939 (Shahabad), 21 March 1939 (Patna).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 21 March 1939, speech at a Patna meeting by Zahrul Haq is an example.

⁷⁶ *The Searchlight*, 12 October 1938, speech by A. N. Sinha at Ranchi District Momin Conference held two days after Ansari was elected president in Hazaribagh. The meeting was also attended by another minister, Jaglal Chaudhury and two parliamentary secretaries.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 12 October 1938, 11 February and 14 March 1939 report examples

⁷⁸ Allahabad, 14 November 1939, Nehru—A.Q. Ansari (in reply to Ansari's of 30 October 1939) in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi, 1977, Vol 10, p 375, *The Searchlight*, 16 May 1939.

⁷⁹ *The Searchlight*, 21 May 1939

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 and 7 May and 11 November 1939

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 14 October 1938.

that had grown among 'most of the Muslims'.⁸² Sajjad's 'introspection' is therefore worth considering in detail.

To begin with, the Jamiat which had supported the Congress in the face of the 'obstructionist tactics' of the Muslim Conference, the Muslim League and the Liberal Federation in the early 1930s, and during the election (against the MUP), had expected to 'march forward in unison'. The Congress had, however, made a 'blunder' in not coalescing with any other party and by not inviting nationalist groups which had a programme akin to its own.

If the allegations levelled against the Congress (by the League) were unfounded and exaggerated, the point that was not to be missed, wrote Sajjad, was that the accusations had 'received universal acceptance coupled with a sincere conviction' that they were authentic. Merely broadcasting explanations and statements on behalf of the Congress and Congress ministers could not have removed the 'mist' that had become so pervasive.

Among the effective measures he suggested as correctives was a thorough inquiry into the communal tension by an impartial tribunal. But more important, a self-examination of its failings and errors which had 'swept away all traces of good faith and popularity for the Congress and the movement'.

Since M.A. Ansari's death, Sajjad wrote, there had never been more than two Muslims in the CWC and this had caused 'great alarm and intense dissatisfaction' not only amongst all the Congress Muslims but even the members of the AICC. '...it has been pointed out to me many times. But they fight shy as they may be branded as a communalist to have raised such a question (even) in the Congress camp'.⁸³ Did nationalism imply that the CWC should comprise 13 Hindus and two Muslims and not the reverse combination? Such things had 'always' been talked about in private but more recently the 'Muslim League members would 'openly taunt' the Congress for 'such flagrant irregularities'. This 'colossal blunder' of the Congress had generated 'many a mischief and gross misunderstanding' among Muslims.

However, the 'master error' was the scrupulous avoidance, as Sajjad put it, of representing Muslims in the provincial and central Congress executive committees. Every year nearly 100 Muslims were elected to the AICC. Were they all worthless? Again, most Congress Muslims complained that they were not treated on the same footing as their fellow Hindu workers. If they still carried on in the Congress, it was either because of their staunch nationalism or on account of their poverty which made them tolerate every disgrace and continue in their jobs.

What betrayed the narrow-mindedness of the Congress was the bypassing of Syed Mahmud for the premier's post. '...does it not imply that as

⁸² What follows is based on Sajjad's note in AICC G-42/1939

⁸³ *Ibid*

Dr Syed Mahmud is not a Hindu, his merits, services and sacrifices do not count? In other words being a non-Hindu he cannot have a right to be the Premier... ⁸⁴ 'Every' Muslim, Congress and non-Congress, 'with the exception of Abdul Bari', Sajjad specified, had attached a significance to Syed Mahmud's non-selection.

Sajjad also mentioned the ill-treatment of Shah Omair and Sultan Ahmed's dismissal as self-evident examples adding that no explanation could blot out the stigma of communalism. Also the non-appointment of Muslims for two years to the Rural Development Department and the foisting of the Wardha scheme, revealed the extent to which Congress had grown communal.

The non-seriousness of the Congress about encouraging Hindustani, and its educational schemes had aroused 'distrust' for the Congress. So had the meagre ratio of the Muslims among the candidates selected for local bodies' elections. Not only did the Congress not support its Muslim candidates as it did the Hindu ones, it also failed to compensate the consequent representational imbalance through nominations. Briefly, there was no getting away from the inevitable conclusion that the Congress was 'communalist to the core'.

Had the CWC followed up the Jamiat's March 1939 resolutions the Hindu-Muslim tensions may have been pacified. Unlike the Muslim League, however, Sajjad's solution to Muslim grievances did not lie only in coalition ministries and reservation of seats but in the recognition of the principle of cultural autonomy.

If the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, which was supportive of the Congress, had reservations about the latter's functioning, so did Syed Mahmud, the leading Congress Muslim of Bihar. Several months after assuming office he told the Governor that if he continued in office it was only because of him. This, Hallett considered was only partly due to friction with his colleagues. The main difficulty he thought was that 'all Congress Muslims, especially with the growth of the Muslim League seemed rather like outcasts'. ⁸⁵

Even before the election Syed Mahmud had merely hoped that he would 'ultimately succeed' and had written to Rajendra Prasad about his fears:

...I am afraid I am left alone by all my colleagues. It was some of the Congress friends here [Chapra] who set up Noorul Hasan against me. None is helping. They talk a great deal but no real help (is forthcoming). Had it not been for the sake of the Congress honour, I would have withdrawn myself from the fight. ⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Lnlithgow Papers, Roll 46 (NMML), Secret No. 355 GB, 8 March 1939, Hallett—Lnlithgow

⁸⁶ c. October 1936 in V N Datta and B. Cleghorn, eds., *A Nationalist Muslim and Indian Politics*, Delhi, 1974, p. 157

He had hesitated to mention his difficulties to anyone but discovered the contest was getting beyond his means.⁸⁷

Syed Mahmud felt the need to remind Rajendra Prasad that his election was the 'main' contest for the Congress in Bihar and he hoped that Rajendra Prasad would not minimise the importance of his success/defeat and leave him 'in the lurch'. Syed Mahmud was mainly concerned about Abdul Aziz and some maulanas touring his constituency to oppose him.⁸⁸

In the course of his tenure as minister of education Syed Mahmud found the charge that he had been favouring Muslims 'so painful' that it was only because of his 'strong sense' of loyalty to the Congress that he did not 'burst up' (sic). Thus he wrote to Rajendra Prasad that on the one hand the Muslims thought that their claims were being overlooked. On the other hand, he was told that 'in Congress circles' it was thought he was giving posts only to Muslims. He presented the list of Muslim appointees to the Provincial Congress Working committee to prove that in fact he had 'appointed none'.⁸⁹

A month and a half after the resignation of the ministry a comment of *The Searchlight* that those Muslims who called themselves nationalists had not discharged their responsibilities, drew a pained reaction from Syed Mahmud. '...Anyone who is not a patriotic Muslim himself can hardly realise the silent sufferings and great sacrifices they had to undergo.'⁹⁰ He reminded readers how for having stood by the Congress after the Shahabad riot of 1917, Mazharul Haque had been branded a traitor but had borne it cheerfully. Though the remark in the newspaper had hurt, coming as it did after being maligned and misunderstood by their co-religionists, nothing would deflect them from their mission.⁹¹

It was within the higher echelons of the Congress that Syed Mahmud was more forthcoming about the charges of communalism, which he euphemistically referred to as 'charges even worse than misgovernment'. They may or may not have been true but were believed to be so by the public at large. He was certain that the belief was not the effect of propaganda alone. Congress had failed to win the confidence of the minorities. As Syed Mahmud explained 'the real background' in which he had suggested (to Gandhi) that minority governments be formed '...was the very great agitation of mind that is troubling me at the present moment owing to what my eyes have seen and witnessed during the past two years of office.... I told Mahatmaji and you (Nehru) only in general

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, he had spent 4,000 rupees and needed another 5,000

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158

⁸⁹ Patna, 18 July 1938 in V. Chaudhary, ed, *RPCD*, Vol II, p 70

⁹⁰ *The Searchlight*, 17 December 1939

⁹¹ *Ibid*

terms what was passing on....⁹² He felt that he could have tackled the communal problem in Bihar but was reticent to say any more about it.⁹³

At another level, the Congress Muslim workers too had their own reservations about their leaders. On the eve of the elections, for example, the Radical Muslim Party of Bhagalpur wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru that their hard work to put up at least 20 Congress Muslim candidates was being crushed by Syed Mahmud who they claimed wanted Muslims to stand on behalf of the MIP or as independents. This they wrote, proved that neither Mahmud nor Shah Muhammad Omair of Gaya had the courage to face their constituencies and therefore they were opposed to fighting on the Congress ticket.⁹⁴

In July 1938 in a representation to the Congress high command about a dozen Congress Muslims complained about Abdul Bari. It was his one aim, they wrote, during the Legislative Assembly election to see that not a single Muslim except him was elected on the Congress ticket, so as to enable him to rule the Congress in the name of the Muslims of Bihar. Also that he was in the habit of 'suppressing and crushing hardworking and promising workers'. Moreover, it was Bari's association with the Congress that made Muslims remain far from the organisation because of the 'indecent and intolerable language' he used. The Congress at both the provincial and central levels was requested by the petitioners to decide on Bari's fitness to hold any Congress post.⁹⁵

In mid-1938 K.B. Sahay, S.K. Sinha's parliamentary secretary suggested the creation of a Muslim Propaganda Department. Involving 52 workers and a total annual expenditure of 22,000 rupees, the department was visualised to explain to Muslims that the ministry had done some positive work for them. Sahay argued that while press propaganda could be contradicted with press notes, it was 'the more mischievous' propaganda carried on among 'the illiterate masses orally or by means of handbills', which could lead to widespread communal riots that was worrying. He admitted that '...in the ordinary course this propaganda should have been counteracted by members of the Congress Party on whose strength the Congress ministry is formed. But unfortunately there are few Muslim MLAs on (the) Congress ticket....'⁹⁶ The chief secretary however, held that the work should actually have been done by the Congress party organisation.⁹⁷

⁹² V.N. Datta and Cleghorn, *A Nationalist Muslim*, Patna, 9 December 1939, p. 184. Also see p. 185.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁹⁴ AICC P-5/1936, note from Wali Hossain, Patna, 19 April 1936; 8 November 1936, Md. Ali Asghar (president, Radical Muslim Party, Bhagalpur)—Nehru

⁹⁵ *Star of India*, 12 July 1938.

⁹⁶ Linlithgow Papers, Roll 45, Enclosure 2, sd/-K B. Sahay (13 June 1938) and S K. Sinha (14 June 1938) with Secret 200 GB, Ranchi, 14 August 1938, Hallett—Brabourne.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* Enclosure 1

Among the Congress Muslim workers⁹⁸ and on the ground⁹⁹ the focus of the Congress mobilisation remained on exhorting the participation of the Muslims in the next phase of the freedom struggle. It was the stress on sacrifices for the same that often became the focus of revealing exchanges. For example Abdul Bari once remarked that no Muslim party, not even the MIP, had supported the freedom struggle, yet all they did was demand assurances for Muslim rights being safeguarded.¹⁰⁰ To this Abdul Jalil replied that while it was true that the Congress had made many sacrifices, if other Muslims had not kept pace surely their rights were still operative. He queried '*Kya hum Musalman Hindustan se bahar jakar Arab ke registar mein ghar banaye?*'¹⁰¹ That this question would not remain a rhetorical one became evident in the course of the decade that followed.

In the emerging polarised politics discussed above, while the ML and the Hindu Mahasabha attempted constructing political communities based on monolithic projections of the putative Hindu and Muslim communities,¹⁰² the Congress, notwithstanding its continuing communitarian mobilisational strategies, tried to oppose the politics of religious community by taking the issue of communalism to the masses through the MMCP.¹⁰³ The ML's Congress Muslim stereotype which initially tried to establish its credentials for safeguarding 'Muslim' community rights, was later deployed to clinch its case of Pakistan. This happened when it repeatedly underlined that gullible Congress Muslims had after all, not been spared in the 1946 riots (for which it squarely blamed the Congress).¹⁰⁴ The subsequent reactions of the Congress Muslims however, only confirm our argument against their stereotyping.

⁹⁸ *Star of India*, 18 May 1938; *The Searchlight*, 10 November 1939.

⁹⁹ For example, *The Searchlight*, 4 January 1938, 10 and 11 November 1939.

¹⁰⁰ *BLAD*, 6 September 1937, p. 711.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1937, p. 739

¹⁰² Turning points in this direction have been located in recent historiography as follows. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Delhi, 1990, p. 200 does not see the ranging of 'Hindu' versus 'Muslim' as a predominant feature of the rural political scene, 'at least until the 1940s'. Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885-1930*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 292 concludes that there was no sharp polarization until the mid-thirties and Sandra B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, Delhi, 1990, p. 96 notes that the politicisation of community activism, which she sees as a distinct process in the emergence of communalism in North India did not begin before the 1920s

¹⁰³ Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, pp. 241 and 244

¹⁰⁴ For a representative example see *Bihar Legislative Assembly Debates*, 12 February 1947, p. 564, speech by Latifur Rahman

A note on some early nineteenth century *inam* records in the Karnataka state archives

Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Delhi School of Economics

Following the defeat and death in 1799 of Fateh Ali Khan, better known by his sobriquet of Tipu Sultan, the throne of Mysore reverted to its erstwhile rulers, the Wodeyar clan. Supported by the English East India Company, the Wodeyars ruled over a state far smaller in its extent than that controlled by Hyder and Tipu, but nevertheless among the largest of the princely states that survived under Pax Britannica. Relatively little is known about the history of this state in the early nineteenth century. While two modern studies exist dealing with society, politics and economy in Mysore from the late nineteenth century on, the earlier period is scarcely so well served.¹ In the present brief note, I intend to point to the existence of a set of records in the Karnataka State Archives, Bangalore, which might be used to shed light on the agrarian economy and society of Mysore in the first half of the nineteenth century, and thus aid in rectifying the historiographical imbalance.

It is known that a fair degree of continuity was preserved between the rule of Hyder and Tipu, and that of the restored Wodeyars, almost as a deliberate act of policy by the English Company. One of Tipu's chief fiscal advisers, Purnaiya, was given a rather powerful role under the later regime as well, and practically exercised powers superior to that of the Wodeyar ruler for the greater part of the first decade of the nineteenth century. In this process, he amassed a substantial fortune, in terms of money as well as revenue-free land grants, with his most conspicuous holding being at Yelandur, on the border of Mysore and Coimbatore. Purnaiya's death in 1812 more

¹ Cf. James Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State: Mysore, 1917–1955*, reprint Delhi 1977; and Bjorn Hettne, *The Political Economy of Indirect Rule. Mysore, 1881–1947*, London, 1978

or less coincided with the accession to the throne of Krishna Raja Wodeyar III, whose reign was marked by sharply deteriorating relations with the Madras government. Finally, taking advantage of a rebellion against the Raja, which broke out at Nagar in 1830 and spread rapidly into other regions gaining the support of a number of *palegars* the Governor-General Lord William Bentick moved in October 1831 to set the Raja aside, and exercise a form of direct control over Mysore.² This act inaugurates a half-century long phase, that of the so-called Mysore Commission, wherein the British—first the Company, and later the Crown—controlled Mysore by means of a series of Commissioners. Then, in 1881, Chamarajendra Wodeyar was restored to the throne, and the system of maintaining a British Resident was resumed.

The vast majority of records in the Karanataka State Archives date to the Post-Rendition period (i.e., the post-1881 period). However, there also exists a mixed and somewhat obscure collection in the archives, the Carton Box Collection, with papers from an earlier period.³ These papers were apparently collected for the most part by the Mysore Commission in its early years, and are usually concerned with the issue of privileged land-tenure or *inam*. However, some of them also deal with other subjects, and a very small number even have to do with Tipu's regime.

Before turning to the question of the *inam* papers, some brief comments are in order concerning the documents which deal with other unrelated subjects. I list a few of these below, from the handlist available in the archives:

- 1) Carton Box No. 51, serial No. 549. Correspondence, in Persian, from Krishna Raja Wodeyar to Lord William Bentick, March 1833.
- 2) Box No. 51, Sl. No. 129. Different orders of Tipu Sultan issued in 1173 (*sic*) Hijri regarding administration of the state.
- 3) Box No. 51, Sl. No. 127. A pamphlet in Persian describing the origin of Coorg, its conquest by Tipu Sultan, the reforms introduced there (AD 1803).
- 4) Box No. 51, Sl. No. 550. An eighteenth century document on 'the religious feelings of both Muslims and Hindus against Christians during Tipu Sultan's reign.'
- 5) Box No. 51, Sl. No. 558. Genealogical table, in Persian, of Tipu Sultan.
- 6) Box No. 43, Sl. No. 469. This is a lengthy correspondence, mostly dating from the period March 1834 to August 1834, and having to do

² See Burton Stein, 'Notes on "Peasant Insurgency" in Colonial Mysore', *South Asia Research*, Vol. V, May 1985, pp. 11-27

³ Cf. R. Muniswamy, 'Karnataka State Archives', in B.M. Gupta, ed., *Handbook of Libraries, Archives and Information Centres in India*, Vol. 9, Part 2, Delhi, 1991, pp. 365-370

with the takeover of Coorg by the Company in that year. Much of the correspondence concerns the imprisonment of the Raja, and attempts to confiscate his treasure. Many of the earlier letters are from Lt. Col. J.S. Fraser, the Political Agent in Coorg, and have to do with the siege and surrender of Mercara fort. Later, we hear of the Raja being transported to Bangalore (in April 1834), and then to Vellore fort (in June or July of the same year). One particularly interesting document, No. 26 in the file, is the 'General list of the Family, Suite and Followers attached to the Ex-Rajah of Coorg', and provides us details of his eight cooks, the thirteen eunuchs from his seraglio, and names and titles of other officials. Interestingly, many of the titles are Indo-Persian (for example, *munshi*, *subedar*, *diwan*, *iamadar*, *mutasaddi*, and so on), even in this rather isolated and obscure kingdom. The search for the Raja's treasure is another theme of importance in the correspondence. It would appear from letter No. 23 of the correspondence that gold and silver coins and ingots worth 1,046,692 rupees were in fact taken from the Coorg Raja as part of the process of conquest.

The Inam Papers

We may now turn to our principal concern in this note, namely the *inam* papers that are to be found in the Carton Box collection. Let us begin by noting that Purnaiya had claimed to Company officials that in 1799, at the time of transition, the extent of revenue-grants for religious purposes had been as follows (in Kantirava Pagodas).⁴

Table 1
Religious Inam Grants, c. 1799

Devasthanas and agraharas	193,959
Mathas and Brahmins	20,000
'Muhammedan establishments'	20,000
Total Grants	233,959

However, one of Purnaiya's first acts after the Wodeyars had been reinstated was to revamp the *inam* system thoroughly. Broadly speaking, these *inam* grants had two components, one in cash and the other in kind. The Company was in particular concerned lest the grants of 'Sir'car lands' grow beyond what they considered to be reasonable bounds. Despite this, Purnaiya appears to have managed a gradual increase in the land grants from the early 1800s to the end of his regime. The figures appear as follows (in Kantirava Pagodas).⁵

⁴ See B Lewis Rice, *Mysore and Coorg. A Gazetteer compiled for the Government of India*, Bangalore, 1877, Vol. I, p 608.

⁵ See M H Gopal, *The Finances of the Mysore State, 1799-1831*, Bombay, 1960, p. 28.

Table 2

Land and Cash Grants and Revenues, 1799–1811

<i>Year</i>	<i>Land Grants</i>	<i>Cash Grants</i>	<i>Gross Revenues</i>
1799–1800	104,306	42,176	2,338,278
1800–1801	104,306	42,176	2,577,453
1801–1802	104,306	40,343	2,632,644
1802–1803	104,306	42,483	2,608,656
1803–1804	104,306	42,483	2,725,291
1809–1810	122,013	77,095	2,803,202
1810–1811	123,724	84,314	2,872,750

The revenues of the Mysore state did not grow inordinately in the years up to 1830, and if anything they seem to have declined. Between 1823 and 1830, they appear to have fluctuated between 2.2 and 2.7 million Kantirava Pagodas, never attaining the levels of the early 1810s. However, the extent of alienation of income by the state increased, becoming a major bone of contention between the Raja and the British Resident. The bulk of this increase seems to have been after 1823–24, when the value of grants in land was still of the order of 131,863 K. Pagodas. But the next year, the amount was up to 176,874 K. Pagodas, and this in addition to cash grants worth 161,421 Pagodas.⁶ The Resident, and the Governor-General at Madras both expressed alarm but decided eventually to hold their peace. The reasons were given by Sir Thomas Munro, who wrote in a minute of November 1825:

As the expenditure by the Rajah under the heads of pagodas, Brahmans, Fakirs, etc., is double what it was in Purniah's account, I wished to have suggested a considerable reduction to the Rajah, but the design was given up because it appeared to the Resident upon further enquiry that Purniah did not show all his disbursements for these heads and that the whole was so little less than the Rajah's expenditure that it was not advisable to make any alteration.⁷

We have some idea of how the land grants were divided in 1824–25. The picture appears as follows.⁸

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 191

⁷ Cited in C. Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer* (compiled for Government), Vol. II, Part IV, Bangalore 1930, p. 2861. For Munro's position on this question, and a more general discussion of the fiscal crisis in Mysore in the 1820s, see Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro The Origins of the Colonial State and his vision of empire*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 267–269.

⁸ Gopal, *Finances of Mysore*, p. 96. For a comparison with the situation in 1827, the following figures are available in *ibid*, p. 129.

Jani namti	131,375
Sarvamanya	59,556
Jagir to Maharaja's son	48,855
Total	239,876 (K P)

Table 3

<i>Division of Land Grants, 1824-25</i>	
<i>Head</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Temples	68,343
Mathas	42,554
Servants	9,626
Nanparvarish	2,525
Fakirs	9,118
Brahmins	22,027
Salary grants	12,240
Other	10,441
Total	176,874

However, the second half of the 1820s saw still further expansions in land grants. From about seven per cent of total state revenues in 1810, combined cash and land grants had grown by 1829 to as high as 14.3 per cent, with land grants being worth twice what the cash grants amounted to. In 1826-27, land grants were estimated at 195,510 K. Pagodas, in the following year at 239,786 K. Pagodas, and finally in 1828-29 at 256,948 K. Pagodas. Asked to explain this rapid increase, the Raja in 1831 argued that they were necessary for the 'dignity of the State', and the 'reputation of my fathers'.⁹ The Company for its part saw the expansion in these *inams* as one of the principal causes of the fiscal crisis that had preceded the rebellion of 1830-31.

Hence, one of the central tasks that the Mysore Commission set for itself was to clarify the extent of *inam* holdings in the kingdom, a task which involved the collection—in the first instance—of as many detailed records as possible on privileged tenure. Carton Box Number 36 preserves a large collection of such papers, for the greater part in Marathi (Modi script), and to a lesser extent in Kannada. Documents 351 to 385, are concerned for example with the holdings of Mathas, as well as other so-called Nirupa and Sarvamanya, and Inamti holdings. Conspicuous among these are the papers of the Sringeri Matha (Sl. Nos. 379 and 380), in a fragile condition, but running to over three hundred pages.¹⁰ Also included, as Serial Number 352, are the papers of the Yelandur Jagir of Purnaiya's descendants.

While the collection in Carton Box 36 is the largest and most extensive, other Carton Boxes too contain *inam* records of interest. In Box 51, one

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

¹⁰ Other private papers of the Sringeri Matha (including its account books) are presently in the process of being transcribed for publication (private communication from Burton Stein, June 1991).

finds Kannada account books of the 'Shanboge' of some villages (Sl. No. 197), accounts in Persian related to grants in cash to a number of Muslim notables (involving at times quite small sums, under Rs. 150). Again Box 43, Sl. No. 471, includes Jamabandi papers of Banavara Taluka, in Kannada and Marathi, from the period 1799 to 1809, while Serial Numbers 472 to 480 in the same box contain other such Jamabandi papers, all from the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

On the basis of such detailed documents, the Mysore Commission attempted to piece together a comprehensive picture of the nature and extent of *inam* lands in the territories under its jurisdiction. These data are presented in two documents, in Carton Box No. 26, Serial Numbers 204 and 205, which are unfortunately in the process of disintegrating. Serial Number 204, which is in better condition than its successor, is entitled 'List of the Inamdars of the Sarvamanyam or Jagheer villages in the territory of His Highness the Rajahs of Mysore showing the dates when they were granted and how they were enjoyed, 1800–1838'. The heads under which the data are organised include (a) Description of Inams (b) Number of Inamdars (c) Number of Villages (d) Amount of Beriz (Revenue) (e) The changes in the Inams and Jodis after 1800. The value of the *inam* is given in sum. Since, however, one of the other aspects that the document seeks to establish is the difference between the *stated* value of the grant, and its actual value in the 1830s, the latter is set out in some detail. Thus, collections are divided into four categories: land revenue, *sair*, *panjbab*, and miscellaneous collections.

It seems appropriate to begin with who the holders of land under privileged tenure in fact were, and the extent of their holdings. I preserve here the original spellings of different terms (Table 4).

Let us begin by noting that the total here (some 119,000 Kantirava Pagodas), is roughly half the stated total for the late 1820s. This does not imply that our list is not a comprehensive one, merely that all the additional grants made in the 1820s were not recognised by the Mysore Commission. In one fell stroke, therefore, the value of land grants was brought back to the levels of the end of Purnaiya's regime, and a *sanad* granted by Purnaiya became the only source of legitimisation of a land grant.

The main categories which enjoy *inam* holdings, according to the above table are five in number: (a) Mathas (b) Agraharas (c) Rajabande (d) Brahmins and (e) Devasthanas. Of these, four categories require no explanation: the *rajabande*, the only obscure group here, are in fact the chief members of the Arasu caste group, and usually close relatives of the ruler himself. The largest grantee among them was the *sarvadhikari* Balaraja Arasu (3,481 Pagodas), followed by Chikkadasa Arasu, and then by Subburajayya, Nanjarajayya, Maudayya, and Devarajayya, sons-in-law of the ruler.

Table 4

Landed Inamdars in Mysore in the 1830s

Category	Inamdars	Villages	Amount (K. Pags.)
1. Bramine	78	66	10,910
2. Rajabunday	19	53	16,531
3. Komarlocue	5	7	3,949
4. Goonkars	6	6	1,144
5. Public servants	8	30	5,795
6. Ugrahar	488	79	22,961
7. Sawcars	2	8	1,295
8. Modiliar	2	8	3,136
9. Bhuwany Sing	1	7	440
10. Jungums	4	4	843
11. Jatties	2	2	220
12. Kuktacodigee	2	3	240
13. Nanpurwursh	2	2	144
14. Setty	1	1	33
15. Deshkoolkeurny	1	3	152
16. Bhutts	2	2	171
17. Hukeems	2	2	232
18. Durgahs	5	6	874
19. Phukeer Cazy	8	9	1,483
20. Dewustans	16	46	9,133
21. Mutts	14	104.5	22,078
22. Dewan Poorniah	1	25	17,161
Total	669	473.5	118,925

Note : Agraharas are measured in *nrttis*; hence we have a large number such as 488. 'Jatties' and 'Setty' are apparently the same

Let us consider now, in turn, the constituents of some of the main categories mentioned above. Of the Mathas, the largest grant is—not suprisingly—to the Sringeri Swami. It comprises 17 villages, in Shimoga and other nearby areas, with a stated value of 7,633 Pagodas. Next in importance is the Parakalasvami Matha, attached to the Melukote temple, whose holdings (15 villages, worth 3,890 Pagodas) are located for the most part in the Patna Ashtagrama. Among the Devasthanas, the only two grants the worth of which exceeds 1,000 Pagodas are to Chamarajeswaraswami in Chamarajanagar (13 villages, 5,919 Pagodas), and to the Jain Basthi at Sravanabelagola (4 villages in Ikkeri, worth 1,102 Pagodas). In contrast to the relatively well-endowed temples, the extent of state support to Islamic establishments has declined considerably between 1799 and 1830. Five *dargahs*, four of which were located in and around Bangalore, the fifth (of 'Baba Boodum') being in Sakrayapatna, had a mere six villages between them, while of the *fakirs* and *qazis*, only one—Hesarmadu Qadir Padishah of Devarayadrag, had a substantial *inam* income (here 1,000 Pagodas).

Some other conspicuous *inam* grants to individuals existed. The most striking of these was that to the family of Purnaiya himself, of 25 villages in Yelandur, whose statistics appear as follows.

Table 5

The Yelandur Inam, c. 1830

Stated Value	17,161
Collections	17,043
– Land revenue	13,006
– Sair	837
– Panjab	846
– Miscellaneous	2,332

Other individual beneficiaries have far smaller grants: in this category, we may include two *sahukars*, Nawal Kishor Das and Damodar Das, Bhawani Singh Jamadar, and Konasamudra Venkata Rao Deshakulkarni, as well as two recipients of *nanparvarish*, Muhammad Yasim and Bahadur Khan Kiladar. Only one other grantee has a substantial holding: this is the famous Triplicane Ramaswami Mudaliyar (and his grandson Sesachala Mudaliyar), who held eight villages worth some 3,200 Pagodas in *inam*.

A general feature of almost all the *inams* concerning which we have information is that their actual value in about 1830 is lower than the stated value on the grant. This was possibly because prices were generally lower in the period than they had been earlier in the century, and since the major component in the value of the grant derived from land-revenue, this too is likely to have been adversely affected. The table below compares the two levels—stated and actual—for a number of categories.

Table 6

Stated and Actual Inam Values, c. 1830

Category	Stated	Actual
Mathas	22,078	18,161
Devasthanas	9,133	7,460
Kumaraloku	3,949	2,581
Gurkars	1,144	1,119
Mudaliyar	3,136	3,211
All categories	118,925	94,442

Conclusion

The purpose of writing this note has been limited. Given the recent resurgence

of interest in *inam* among historians of south India in the early colonial period, I wished to point out the existence of a little-known additional set of *inam* papers, those concerning the princely state of Mysore. From the brief discussion above, it is clear that the extent of alienation of revenue by way of *inam* in Mysore, even during the rapid spurt of the late 1820s, was far lower than in another princely state of south India, Pudukkottai.¹¹

It would seem evident that the collection of these *inam* records by the Mysore Commission was related in one way or another to the broad-based attack on these privileged tenures which was launched in roughly this period by one section of Company officials. We see this articulated extremely clearly in the correspondence between the Mysore Residents and Madras, analysed in some detail by M.H. Gopal in his study of the finances of early nineteenth century Mysore.¹² On the other hand, it is equally clear that the Wodeyar rulers, caught between an increasingly aggressive Company (we have noted briefly the annexation by the Company of neighbouring Coorg in 1834), and the need to appear legitimate in the eyes of their own subjects, had to use this form of cake-sharing as a political device. The struggle over *inam* thus encapsulates the transition between an older order, and the new rules of the game as defined by the Company Bahadur.¹³

¹¹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 407–434. Dirks estimates that between 1856 and 1882, the proportion of *inam* and *jagir* land to total cultivable land in Pudukkottai ranged between 67 and 75 per cent. His information is based largely on the 1888 Inam Settlement for the state. The most important category among the *inam* holders in Pudukkottai were the *devasthanams*.

¹² Cf. Gopal, *Finances of the Mysore State*, passim.

¹³ For a discussion of *inam* in another context in the same time period, see Sumit Guha, 'Society and Economy in the Deccan, 1818–1850', *IESHR*, Vol. 20, 4, 1983, pp. 389–413, especially pp. 409–11.

Love and devotion is understood by all, is available to all, can be performed by all. The religion professed by Caitanya thus had wide appeal.

Another quality of Caitanyadeva's religion is its syncretism. The society of Caitanyadeva's time was fragmented into various religious sects, but *bhakti* which subsumes the entire range of religious experience from mysticism to philosophical speculation, contains a suggestion of a synthesis which attracted the believers in *māyā*, the tantriks, the Bauddha and Vaiṣṇava *sahaja* worshippers, the followers of the Nātha cult etc., under the banner of devotionism. The original organisational form of *bhakti* was the *samkīrtan*. Everybody could freely join the *samkīrtan* and sing and dance in a state of devotional ecstasy. Caitanyadeva tried to unite every member of Bengali society through his *samkīrtan*-based religion, disregarding barriers of rank and status and sectarian heterogeneity.

The fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries may be considered the period of efflorescence of the cultural identity of the Bengalis. From the thirteenth century, Bengal's contact with the outside world had become tenuous, but with the cultivation of *navya-nyāya* philosophy in Navadvipa, Bengal's link with the outside world began to be re-established. This may have occurred at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Before Caitanyadeva, Bengal had no role to play in the ongoing debate between the *advaita* philosophy and the *bhakti* school of thought. Caitanyadeva was the first Bengali to preach his own point of view by participating in an all-India philosophical debate. It was primarily through his efforts that Navadvipa, Vrindavana and Puri became the major and obligatory centres of pilgrimage for the Vaiṣṇava followers of Caitanya. Puri is one of the major conduits of cultural exchange between north and south India, Vrindavana is situated in the heart of north India, and is reached through such ancient centres of pilgrimage and learning as Kashi, Prayaga and Mathura. If one travelled through Puri and Vrindavana, one knew a good deal of India's cultural diversity. From the beginning there were scholars, poets, dancers and musicians, painters, artisans and merchants among the followers of Caitanya. If we keep this in mind, it appears that pilgrimage to Puri and Vrindavana was not merely an occasion for accumulating religious virtue. For the artists and seekers of scriptural wisdom, this was an opportunity to acquire knowledge and new techniques of craftsmanship. The author says that there is no evidence to suggest that Caitanyadeva planned all this, but it is reasonable to surmise that he had in mind the functional utility of such external linkages. The premises and practice of Caitanya's religion had promised people a superior ideal of life at a time when the regional consciousness of the Bengalis was about to develop. Caitanyadeva attempted to bring together the fragmented Bengalis on the basis of tolerance and harmony. The large-scale expansion and diverse richness of Bengali culture between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries bear testimony to the success of his endeavour

Gradually the majority of Bengali Hindu society took to the particular variety of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism professed by Caitanya and shaped by his followers. But the number in itself is inconsequential: the author says that it is the universal impact of the movement that counts. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century Vaiṣṇava devotional culture was the main flow of the Bengali cultural stream. Every Bengali inherits the Vaiṣṇava culture, irrespective of his sectarian nomenclature.

This universality of Vaiṣṇava culture is best exemplified in *kīrtan*. There was no central monastic organisation of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas did not all have faith in the philosophical foundation of Caitanyite devotionalism, a hindrance to the creation of an organisation. But the greatest obstacle was the emergence of innumerable groups and sub-groups. Thus the Caitanya-inspired cultural efflorescence of the Bengalis lost its vitality by the eighteenth century. Even so the universal culture enunciated by Caitanya, articulated mainly through *kīrtan*, was uninterrupted for a very long time. Listening to the performance of *līlākīrtan*, men from all strata of society learned to savour the taste of high literary and musical productions and the essence of religious scriptures. To the devotee, *kīrtan* is the means of inducing devotion that leads to liberation. But at the same time *kīrtan* is also an occasion for social congregation and purveyor of popular instruction.

The tradition of singing in praise of god is an old one in Indian culture. But the popularisation of *kīrtan* as a regular and definitive method of worship was perhaps coterminous with the expansion of devotional religion. Devotional religion is essentially popular in character: *bhajan-kīrtan* inspires many people at the same time. As a method of worship *kīrtan* is simple and unostentatious. There is no need of rituals and ceremonies, no scope for asceticism, even initiation under a master is unnecessary. It is difficult to imagine a more certain and easily available means for the good of so many. Even before Caitanyadeva, there was a tradition of singing spiritual songs in chorus among the more obscure religious sects (*gūhyas*) of Bengal. In the religious practice of these communities also there was no distinction of caste; even the untouchables could participate in it. But the *gūhyas* practised their religion in secret, behind the critical eye of the society; so social norms were not directly violated. As a result, to the refined section of the society, these obscure forms of worship were considered deplorable, but not dangerous. On the other hand the *saṁkīrtan* that was popularised by Caitanyadeva was performed in public. Men of all descriptions gathered to sing and dance in the name of god. The conservatives felt threatened. Sanyal believes that in the repeated utterance (*kīrtan*) of the name of Kṛṣṇa by a Caṇḍāla lies the significance and success of devotional religion.

In the most difficult and important section of the book the author has analysed the reasons for the spread of *bhakti* in medieval Bengal. In

Caitanya's time there were many *guhya* communities in Bengal who worshipped according to the tenets of Bauddha, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta *tantras*. They worshipped in the left-handed tantric sexo-yogic or pure yogic techniques. Vaiṣṇava *sahaja* (which is the great idea or *mahābhāva*) worship emerged out of the tantric, particularly the Bauddha *sahaja* form of worship. As in the Bauddha *tantras* the non-dual *sahaja* is constituted of two elements—the masculine and the feminine; similarly in the Vaiṣṇava *sahajiyā* worship, *sahaja* consists of *rasa* and *rati*, represented by Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā respectively. Following the principle of *tantra*, the Vaiṣṇava *sahaja* worshippers believe that every man and woman is essentially the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā; human existence is merely an external form. The consciousness of this external form has to be sublimated through the practice of attribution (*āropa*). The worshippers will be able to realise the inexpressible love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa if they succeed in attributing the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to themselves and unite through sexo-yogic techniques in their essential selves. Divinity was ascribed to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā on the assumption that the sensation of love cannot be enjoyed without their mercy; hence they are objects of worship and devotion. Devotionalism thus found its way into the Vaiṣṇava tantric form of worship.

The method of worship recommended by the scriptures of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, composed by Caitanya's disciples—the Goswamis of Vrindavan, is somewhat different. The philosophical foundation of devotionalism, called the theory of *acintyabhedābheda*, consists of an assessment of the relationship between *brahma* and living organisms. According to this theory Kṛṣṇa, the fundamental reality, is non-dual; he is omnipotent. Energy (*śakti*) is the expression of the one endowed with energy, but he himself is not energy. Thus it is possible to conceive of a division between the two. At the same time, since energy cannot exist independently of the one endowed with energy, they are undifferentiated. This simultaneous relationship between the differentiated and the undifferentiated is comprehensible only to knowledge which is beyond sensory perception. The natural attraction of energy towards the one endowed with energy is love. Living organisms are the external energy of Kṛṣṇa and therefore cannot be associated with him. That right is reserved only for those who reflect Kṛṣṇa's energy in its elemental form, i.e., Kṛṣṇa's companions during his divine play in Vrindavana. Rādhā is its best example, who embodies love. She is derived from Kṛṣṇa; together they constitute the dual form of a fundamental non-duality. Love consists of the realisation of their divine play through devotion. Neither the *bhakti* professed by Caitanya, nor the philosophical precepts of the Goswamis support the pure tantric way of worship.

It is difficult to measure the extent of influence of the *guhya* forms of worship on Bengali society during Caitanyadeva's time. But it can be inferred that it was restricted to the lower strata of society. These *guhya*

sects avoided theorisation and institutional forms of worship; they did not entertain caste distinctions nor considerations of purity and pollution. With the expansion of the political power of the Turko-Afghans in the thirteenth century Bengal, the Buddhist and brahmanical religions suffered a serious setback. It is reasonable to suppose that as a result of the opposition to public performance of worship, more and more people took refuge in the *guhya* communities. At the same time there was a reassertion of brahmanism, indicated by the growth in the study of *vedānta* and *navya-nyāya* and the composition of *smṛti* literature in Bengal. Brahmanism is essentially syncretistic and even admits of the *tantra* which is contrary to Vedism. But, with all its flexibility, brahmanism never came to terms with the religious practices of the *guhya* sects, nor did the upper strata of the society ever accept them. The followers of these *guhya* cults were attracted by Caitanya's call to enjoy the pleasures of the realisation of love through devotion. It was a simple method; love would emerge out of the eightfold *sāttvika* emotions and the consequent ecstasy through participation in public collective *kīrtan*. It was thus possible for the *guhya* communities to participate in the devotional method of worship in the presence of all, while preserving their own faiths.

After the death of Caitanyadeva, Swarup Damodar, his closest associate in Puri, introduced the idea that Caitanya was the simultaneous manifestation of both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, i.e., *yugalāvatāra*. *Yugalāvatāra* is basically the Vaiṣṇava garb of a tantric metaphor, the process of the transformation of dual into non-dual. Those who seek the existence of love in the union of the great *puruṣa* and the primordial *prakṛti*, found the quintessence of love in *yugalāvatāra* Caitanya. The *guhya* worshippers came to devotionalism through adjustment in the realm of ideas. But most of them continued with their sexual tantric practices at the same time. They derived theoretical justification of their conduct from Krishnadas Kaviraj's influential biography of Caitanya—the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*.⁵ Possibly there was a little remnant of the tradition of tantric worship in Krishnadas, but it was in the form of abstract theory. Krishnadas discussed the process of the development of love for Kṛṣṇa through the method of *rāgānugā* devotion (the natural, spontaneous attraction of the *gopīs* for Kṛṣṇa), following the tenets of the Goswamis, which make no allusion to physical love. However, Krishnadas described Rādhā's intense longing for Kṛṣṇa and her anxiety to unite with him in the metaphor of sexual attraction between male and female, and that too in terms of love for another man's woman (*parakīyā*). Krishnadas' preference for the *parakīyā* idea found favour with the *sahaja* worshippers, who assumed that his theorisations supported their position. Even though there is no similarity between the *rāgānugā* devotion of the Goswamis and

⁵ Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, Sukumar Sen and Tarapada Mukhopadhyaya (eds.), Calcutta, 1392 B.S.

the *rāga* way of worship of the Sahajiyās, the Sahajiyās claim that all the hidden truths of their *parakīyā* tantric religion can be discovered in the writings of the Goswamis. In this way the Vaiṣṇava tantrics attempted to appropriate all the aspects of the *bhakti* movement in their *sahaja* form of worship.

Vrindavana emerged as the greatest centre of Caitanyism at a time when the *bhakti* movement in Bengal was breaking up as a result of group differences. The Goswamis of Vrindavana were followers of Caitanya, but they had fundamental differences of opinion with the *mahāntas* of Bengal with regard to both the method of worship and its philosophical basis. To begin with, there was difference in the conception of Caitanya himself. To the believers of *gaurapāramayavāda* of Bengal, Caitanyadeva was the ultimate godhead; both the worship and *kīrtan* of Caitanya were current in Bengal. The Goswamis also believed in the divinity of Caitanyadeva, but they never mentioned it in the *bhakti* literature they composed. According to them Kṛṣṇa was the ultimate truth; Caitanyadeva was his incarnation who appeared for the propagation of *bhakti*. So worship of Caitanya was improper. Second, the Bengali followers of Caitanya did not accept the conclusions of the Goswamis on the significance and method of acquiring *bhakti*. In Caitanyadeva's formulation living organisms can perceive the substance of the divine play of Kṛṣṇa through correct religious practice. Love, which is supreme devotion, is born out of this perception, if the devotee engages in selfless emotion-filled *kīrtan*. In the Goswami literature however, love has a different connotation. According to them, living organisms are part of Kṛṣṇa but at the same time external to him, under the influence of *māyā*. The duty of the living organisms is to know their real identity by freeing themselves from the snare of *māyā*. For this one has to take refuge in Kṛṣṇa, which is the way of devotion. Devotion culminates in love. Love cannot be achieved directly through perception alone. The third point of difference was over *kīrtan*. In accordance with the teachings of Caitanyadeva the *mahāntas* of Bengal preached that achievement of *bhakti* was inevitable through concentrated passionate performance of *kīrtan*. The Goswamis however believed that *kīrtan* was merely the performance of a prescribed rite leading to devotion (*vaidhībhakti*), and therefore it was an inferior method of accomplishing salvation. The Goswami scriptures stated the necessity of surpassing the prescribed means, and extolled the superiority of *rāgānugā* devotion in unambiguous terms. Thus the Goswamis, in their effort to specify the theoretical underpinnings of the means and object of devotional worship, on a par with the other religious communities of contemporary India, changed the original form of the *bhakti* movement to a large extent. Had the propagation of devotional religion in Bengal and the studies in the philosophy of devotion in Vrindavana been complementary to one another, it would have enormously strengthened the movement.

But Bengal's ties with Vrindavana were completely severed with the demise of Caitanyadeva.

Subsequently Narottama Das, who was deputed by Jiva Goswami of Vrindavana to preach *bhakti* religion in Bengal, brought about a compromise between the Vrindavana and the Bengal schools of thought by introducing new techniques of *kīrtan*. Narottama was an efficient organiser. He understood that Caitanyism could not survive without the proper interpretation of scriptures. Hence the conclusions of the Goswamis were indispensable to establish Caitanyadeva on a firm footing. For Narottama the divinity of Caitanyadeva was axiomatic, but Kṛṣṇa was exclusive and without parallel. According to the conclusions of the Goswamis, the union of Kṛṣṇa with his *hlādinī-śakti* Rādhā is the greatest sport of Vrindavana; the mystery of Vrindavana is concealed in this divine play in the love mood (*madhura rasa*). That is why the aim of a devotee is to acquire the right to serve Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā by worshipping them in the love mood. Narottama Das said that in order to realise this goal, the devotee has to take resort to Caitanyadeva because he has presented to the world the ideal state of love for Kṛṣṇa by appearing as the essence of both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

For the public collective performance of religion, however, Narottama declared the efficacy of *kīrtan*. But Narottama had a significant difference of opinion with the earlier *mahāntas* of Bengal, regarding *kīrtan*. Unlike them, he eulogised *kīrtan* as the means of elevation into a higher plane of worship through theoretical and spiritual interpretation rather than the means of perception and experience through emotion alone. Apparently Narottama's point of view was in accordance with the Goswami literature. But Narottama did not treat *kīrtan* merely as one of the prescribed rites. In his opinion *kīrtan* was an independent and special way of achieving devotion. He proposed that through *kīrtan* of the name of God, with the help of theoretical argument and scriptural discipline, one can rise to a higher spiritual plane to probe the mystery of Kṛṣṇa's divine sport in Vrindavana. Thus *kīrtan*, which was available to all, became the vehicle for the propagation of philosophical disputation and scriptural knowledge. The composite religion which emerged out of a synthesis between the *kṛṣṇapāramyavāda* of the Goswamis and the characteristic features of Bengal devotionism such as the worship of Caitanya, the importance of *kīrtan* and the belief system of the *sahaja* form of worship, is known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, the institutional form of Caitanyite devotionism. Narottama Das was its principal organiser and Krishnadas Kaviraj the chief exponent.

Narottama Das organised a great convention at Kheturi to which he invited all the Vaiṣṇava group leaders of Bengal. The objective of the Kheturi convention was to bring together all the fragmented Vaiṣṇava groups on the basis of this new ideology. On the birthday of Caitanyadeva, in the presence of all the Vaiṣṇava groups, Srinivas Acharya consecrated

and worshipped five icons of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā and one icon of Caitanya-Viṣṇupriyā (the wife of Caitanya). Everybody approved of this which would have been impossible had the *mahāntas* of Bengal not admitted the superiority of the conclusions of the Goswamis. But it can be observed that the consecration of the icons was not entirely in accordance with the conclusions of the Goswamis who did not accept the worship of Caitanya. Possibly Narottama consecrated the icon of Caitanya, keeping in mind the tradition prevalent in Bengal. The presence of Viṣṇupriyā by the side of Caitanya was comparable with the presence of Rādhā by the side of Kṛṣṇa. The suggestion was Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya were identical. But then there were five icons of Kṛṣṇa to only one of Caitanya. Thus although Caitanya was worshipped, on the whole, veneration of Kṛṣṇa of the Goswami theory received priority, both numerically and in content.

The success of this endeavour was evident in the new techniques of *kīrtan* introduced by Narottama at Kheturi. *Kīrtan* was sung according to the rules of classical music—slow amplification in the *dhrupada* style was followed by the actual song. The convention that *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* would be sung after the songs on Caitanya's life, was established here. This is known as *gauracandrikā*. There is a deep theoretical justification of singing *gauracandrikā* which is drawn from the *yugalāvatāra* theory. Only the life of Caitanya mirrors the supernatural significance of the love play of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā. Rādhā is not separate from Kṛṣṇa; thus in their union the apparent duality finally resolves in a joyous undifferentiated non-duality. The inscrutable significance of this love is realised in Caitanyadeva who is the simultaneous manifestation of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā in one form, both dual and non-dual at the same time. Narottama Das transformed the *padāvalī* (Bengali Vaiṣṇava lyrics) verses into *līlākīrtan*, systematised them and firmly established the practice of singing them in public. He brought the *padāvalī* songs from the court out on the open platform. The *kīrtan* that Narottama introduced was the method of worship in the Goswami way. Thus *līlākīrtan* preceded by *gauracandrikā* is a syncretistic form of worship which is followed by the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal till today.

After this long excursion into the theoretical backdrop of *kīrtan*, the author comes back to his original theme—the relationship between *kīrtan* and the village culture in medieval Bengal. Here *kīrtan*, in a generalised sense, stands for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava religion, for *kīrtan* was the mainstay of its method of worship and the symbol of the Vaiṣṇava attempt at social organisation. The author says that cultural awareness was one of the important qualities of the Vaiṣṇavas. As a result of the diversity and commitment to culture of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community, the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries witnessed an efflorescence of Bengali culture, best seen in the unprecedented richness of the Bengali language and literature, as reflected in the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* verses. Biographical literature in

Bengal began with the poetical renderings of Caitanyadeva's life history. The theoreticians of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism founded Bengal's independent variety of scriptural discourse. The theory of *acintyabhedābheda*, the philosophical basis of their concept of love, was unique in the field of Indian philosophical speculation. From the concept of love emerged the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava aesthetics. Most of the temples constructed between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century in Bengal were Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples. The walls of these temples were embellished with terracotta sculptures to a far greater extent than the temples of the other deities. Frescoes are rare in Bengal, but it was customary to inscribe designs on the wooden boards that served as covers to the manuscripts. This became a common tradition among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava promoters of learning, particularly in the south-west Bengal, and hence developed Bengal's regional school of painting. This cultural awareness of the Vaiṣṇavas received widespread patronage.

Despite consensus on broad issues, minor differences of opinion generated ceaseless debates among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, as attested by the enormous collection of Bengali manuscripts. One such debate was on the nature of Kṛṣṇa's relationship with the gopīs, centring on the *parakīyā* question. Another one pertained to Kṛṣṇa's relationship with living organisms, arising out of the theoretical differences between the Goswami-prescribed method of worship through love and the attributional worship of the Sahajiyās. There was a strong debate on the question of caste distinction and the right to worship. Caitanya's precepts of worship through *bhakti* did not admit of caste privileges; everybody had same right to worship. *Haribhaktivilāsaḥ*,⁶ the Vaiṣṇava *smṛti* text composed by the Goswamis, however, accepted differentiation on the basis of caste. Even after the popularisation of the Goswamis' views in Bengal, many adhered to the opinion of Caitanyadeva. Finally, there was the great controversy regarding the object of worship, i.e., *gaurapāramyavāda* versus *kṛṣṇapāramyavāda*. Since so many contrasting points of view were in vogue, it was necessary even for the common Vaiṣṇava devotee, let alone the adept, to acquire theoretical knowledge in order to understand the essence of this polemic. It was difficult to command respect in Vaiṣṇava society without theoretical discussions. Among the major scriptures of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, only *Caitanyacariṭāmṛta* is written in Bengali; all the rest are in Sanskrit. Ordinary Vaiṣṇavas could not read these texts, but they were eager to learn the meaning of scriptures. Hence the sanskritist Vaiṣṇava poets translated them into Bengali, so that everybody with elementary education could have access to them.

The universality of the *bhakti* movement was preserved even within the codified discipline of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. From the beginning there was

⁶ Gopala Bhatta, *Haribhaktivilāsaḥ*, Puridas Mahashay (ed.), Maymansingha, 1946.

no restriction on the performance of *kīrtan* and under the auspices of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava religion even the common devotee acquired the right to participate in theoretical discussions. Quite a few manuscripts contain the names of their authors or owners. In some cases even their caste is mentioned. It is interesting that while there are references to the three upper castes, they are outnumbered by men from the lower castes and even untouchables. Formal education was in vogue in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society, both among men and women. Highly educated Vaiṣṇava women used to recite and interpret scriptures in public. Further evidence of the spread of universal education in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society is that many famous *kīrtanīyās* belonged to the low castes.

The attempt to disseminate knowledge, in a manner both simple and enjoyable for the common men, met with great success in the *līlākīrtan*. In the *līlākīrtan* difficult themes are simplified with the help of such explanatory devices as *dohā*, *kathā* and *ākhar*, without disturbing either the seriousness of the theory or the beauty of the lyrics. Both spiritually and culturally, *līlākīrtan* is the constituent of civilisation in the village society. *Saṁkīrtan* is a collective function of the entire village; everybody can participate in it because in a *kīrtan* gathering there is no fear of pollution. *Kīrtan* was the means of organising the ever-increasing number of the devotees. The organisational strength of the Vaiṣṇavas developed under the influence of *kīrtan*, and it was with the help of this organisational strength that the followers of Caitanya could resist social opposition and assault from the state. In fact, Caitanyadeva raised self-esteem among the common people; he gave them confidence. *Kīrtan* was the organisation to instil courage in the common man, both within and without.

The author ends with a note of regret. The best days of *kīrtan* are over. The new media of communication which are easily accessible cater more to temporary excitement than development of the mind. Rural patronage of *kīrtan* has also dried up. *Kīrtan* developed in the conducive environment of a self-supporting village society which no longer exists. This was perhaps inevitable with the change of time. But the author feels that it is a matter of grave concern that no alternative organisation of the rural people emerged to keep their natural self-respect and elementary cooperative sense going.

The medieval *bhakti* movement was not confined to Bengal. Many such movements in different parts of medieval India were very similar. Most of the *bhakti* religions have emphasised the need of the devotee's emotional perception of and surrender to his object of worship, and attempted to draw together common people irrespective of their caste and rank. There has also been considerable research on the subject. Recently Krishna Sharma has raised doubts regarding the very definition of the term *bhakti*. She has pointed out that neither a fixed belief in a personal God, nor the rejection of knowledge and the monistic view of reality appear as necessary

concomitants of *bhakti* in the classical texts of ancient India. On the contrary, active spiritual endeavour on the part of the devotee is very often described in these texts as a necessary constituent of *bhakti*.⁷ Sanyal has proved beyond doubt that theoretical discussions on precisely such issues largely controlled the nature and direction of the *bhakti* movement in Bengal. But most of the research on *bhakti* usually revolves around its religious content.⁸ For example, Daniel Gold has shown in his recently published work on the *bhakti* saint poets of north India⁹ how the *guru*, who preached *bhakti*, very often took the place of the deity, in direct parallel to the debate between Gaura and Kṛṣṇa *pāramyavāda* in Bengal. Gold has introduced new perspectives of time and space to the discussion on *bhakti*, but on the whole his analysis conforms to the prevailing pattern. This is also true of Vaudeville's long and learned introduction of her translation of Kabir. Vaudeville effectively demonstrates a certain continuity between the thought and attitudes of the Nāth-panth and tantric Yoga practices and the philosophy of Kabir. But she does not touch upon its social implications, except peripherally.¹⁰ However, social questions are not altogether ignored in the literature. For instance, some historians have suggested that the south Indian *bhakti* movement was primarily a protest against existing social norms. Recently Veluthat Keshavan¹¹ and M.G.S. Narayanan¹² have revealed a correspondence between both the south Indian, *bhakti* movement and the temple-based brahmanical movement on the one hand and the feudal ideology of loyalty on the other. For north India, Irfan Habib has explained the mass participation in the *bhakti* movement during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries in terms of the need for readjustment within the caste system, necessitated by certain economic and administrative changes following the establishment of the Turkish state in India. In particular, he points to the relative affluence of certain low castes, resulting from these changes, and their consequent search for social status that led to attacks on the caste

⁷ Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1987, p. 109.

⁸ See note 1. of Harbans Mukhia, 'The Ideology of the Bhakti Movement: The Case of Dadu Dayal', in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.), *History and Society: Essays in Honour of Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray*, K. P. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1976, for a summary of the different understandings of the origin and nature of the *bhakti* movement. It may be observed that be it the influence of the Islamic concept of the unity of God on Hindu polytheism or the Hindu response to the Islamic challenge, the point of reference in all these writings is inevitably the religious content of the *bhakti*, p. 357.

⁹ Daniel Gold, *The Lord as Guru: Hindu Sants in the Northern Indian Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987

¹⁰ Charlotte Vaudeville, *Kabir*, Vol. I, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974

¹¹ Veluthat Keshavan, 'The Temple Base of the Bhakti Movement', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1979

¹² M.G.S. Narayanan and Veluthat Keshavan, 'Bhakti Movement in South India', in S.C. Malik (ed.), *Indian Movements Some Aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reform*, Shimla, 1978.

system as a whole.¹³ But most historians are silent on the role of the *bhakti* movement in social organisation. Both Sushil Kumar De's old and authoritative book¹⁴ and Ramakanta Chakrabarti's recent and highly informative book¹⁵ on the subject attach little importance to the question of the social significance of the *bhakti* movement. Ramakanta Chakrabarti's book contains a relevant chapter, but he appears to be undecided on the fundamental issue of the influence of the movement on the caste structure of Bengal. It is to Sanyal's credit that in spite of a detailed exposition of the religious and scriptural aspects of *bhakti*, the focal point of the book under review remains the role of the movement in the social organisation of Bengal through *kīrtan* and the emergence of Bengal's cultural identity. In fact, it is remarkable that he has been able to treat his subject primarily in the realm of ideas, without ever losing sight of their material moorings. In this respect, the book may be described as a pioneer in the historiography of the *bhakti* movement.

Theoretically the book draws our attention to an extremely important process in the religious tradition of Bengal. The author has succinctly demonstrated, in connection with his discussion on the reasons for the spread of *bhakti*, how the *bhakti* ideology had to adjust to the tantric tradition of Bengal from the beginning, and how the original form of *bhakti* was nearly completely appropriated by the *sahaja* worshippers. *Bhakti* has no place in pure tantricism, for every man and woman is the god or the goddess in his/her real self. At the same time, tantricism is so deeply rooted in the religious milieu of Bengal that no religion, let alone *bhakti*, can gain a toehold in Bengal without coming to terms with it. The ultimate success of the *bhakti* movement in Bengal was due to its tacit understanding with *tantra*. Historians of religion often tend to forget that *tantra* is not a system of religious belief; it is merely a technique of worship. As a result, *tantra* does not find it difficult to usurp a belief system and to transform it into its own mould. That is why *tantra* does not have an independent shape, it is either Bauddha or Vaiṣṇava, either Śaiva or Śākta. None of these aspects have been separately discussed by Sanyal, but an understanding of the basic character of *tantra* pervades the book, which is an ideal synthesis of personal experience, intuitive understanding and scriptural wisdom which is becoming increasingly rare. Mostly under western influence, social science in India today is undergoing a fundamental change both in its concerns and in its analytical apparatus, which naturally has its advantages, but it is a

¹³ Irfan Habib, 'The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th–17th Centuries', presented to the seminar on Ideas, Medieval India, University of Delhi, November 1965.

¹⁴ Sushil Kumar De, *Early History of Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal from Sanskrit and Early Bengali Sources*, General Printers and Publishers Ltd., Calcutta, 1942

¹⁵ Ramakanta Chakrabarti, *Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal 1486–1900*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 1985

pity that as a result India's indigenous tradition of classical scholarship is becoming feeble and inert.

Nevertheless, an important question remains. Did the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava religion wipe out caste distinctions from Bengali society? The author has repeatedly mentioned that participation in the performance of public collective *kīrtan* and the right to salvation of all, irrespective of caste and gender differentiation, was the cornerstone of the religion professed by Caitanya. He has underscored its deep social significance. He has quoted extensively from the biographies of Caitanya to show that the main objective of Caitanya's preaching was not to distinguish between Caṇḍāla-Yavana and men of higher castes. The author believes that as a result the dignity and rights of man were established irrespective of his social identity. Tapan Raychaudhuri, on the other hand, feels that the modification of caste ideas and practices brought about by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism was much less revolutionary than is popularly supposed. The *Haribhaktivilāsaḥ* throughout reveals a deep reverence for the system of caste. At best, within the society, the rigours of the caste system were somewhat relaxed. Rather, the absence of any wider social outlook actually circumscribed the progressive character of the movement.¹⁶ Sanyal too admits that *Haribhaktivilāsaḥ* approves of the caste hierarchy.¹⁷ But only twice in his book does he somewhat reluctantly concede that like the other sections of the Hindu society, governed by the brahmanical *smṛtis*, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas also observed caste differentiation; Caitanyadeva never advised a direct transgression of the caste system.¹⁸ But at the same time he adds that Caitanyadeva created a common ground for a harmonious social existence of all. It was impossible to overcome the misery and disgrace of being born in a low caste in social life, but Caitanyadeva declared that nobody will remain deprived of his basic human dignity because of his low status. Particularly in the field of education and worship the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas did transcend the restrictions of social identity. The author reminds us that this was made possible within the limits of the conventional structure of the rural society, and cites various types of evidence to suggest that there was no restriction on participation in *saṁkīrtan*; in the field of education, for all practical purposes, distinctions of caste and gender were obliterated, and that there are innumerable instances of men of high caste receiving formal education and lessons in *kīrtan* from masters belonging to low castes. But the most important operational aspects of caste is the contraction of marriage relations and the radical religious movements within Hinduism, which adopted a liberal attitude towards caste, have seldom, if ever, recommended transgression of caste

¹⁶ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir: An Introductory Study in Social History*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1969, pp. 137–138.

¹⁷ Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal, *Bāṅglā Kīrtaner Itihāsa*, p. 230.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 234

consideration in marriage. Thus the essential basis of caste structure has never been sufficiently challenged by such movements, although it is curious that very few historians seem to have noticed this. Again, Sanyal does not distinguish between the lay Vaiṣṇava devotees and the formal converts who joined the Vaiṣṇava monastic organisation (*ākhārā*) with regard to their respective attitudes towards caste. Undeniably the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas succeeded in at least considerably softening the rigours of the caste system, but it has to be admitted that in the everyday life of medieval Bengal caste was a reality, in spite of the overwhelming presence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

Sanyal says that eighty-five per cent of Bengali Hindus were followers of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava religion.¹⁹ Tapan Raychaudhuri believes that Vaiṣṇavism never became the creed of the majority of the Bengalis. Rather, the invocations to the gods which appear in the Bengali *pāñcālīs* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, seem to suggest that most of the shrines were dedicated to tantrik or local deities.²⁰ It is impossible to compute proper statistics on this, but Sanyal's assumption appears to be reasonable because even though the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās followed the tantrik way in the functional aspect of their worship, they should be formally included within Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in an institutional sense.²¹ We have already observed that *tantra* is not a system of religious belief and those who are not alive to this subtlety in the history of Indian religions, are likely to commit this mistake. If Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism was so widespread in medieval Bengal, then it must have exercised some influence even on the non-Vaiṣṇava sections of the society.

On one relevant aspect of the subject, however, Sanyal has made no comment, although it could have further enriched his book. He is silent on the role of women in the composition and performance of *kīrtan* and its social significance. Sanyal attaches enormous importance to the spread of formal education among women in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society; he makes repeated mention of this. But nowhere has he clearly stated that many women used to write and publicly sing *kīrtan*. A typical *kīrtan* performance consists of a number of songs woven together into a narrative that centres almost inevitably on a phase in the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The figure of Rādhā as portrayed by *kīrtanīyās* of both sexes is one of great strength. The power and single-mindedness of her love for Kṛṣṇa render her oblivious to the hardships through which she must pass on her way to meet him. Not only is Rādhā a strong character in her own right, but the singers

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁰ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir*, p. 135.

²¹ One must, however, remember in this connection that precise facts and figures regarding the institutional affiliation of a lay devotee are nearly impossible to arrive at and therefore any such generalisation is necessarily based on impressionistic assumptions.

explicitly exalt her over Kṛṣṇa. Such exaltations are especially prominent in stories woven around Rādhā's response to Kṛṣṇa's fickleness. In these episodes, the *kīrtanīyās* depict Rādhā's emotions in all their depth and subtlety, skilfully rendering the complex of jealousy, anger and intense yearning that follows upon her discovery of Kṛṣṇa's infidelity. Yet surprisingly, if one has in mind a model in which Kṛṣṇa is god and Rādhā represents the ideal devotee, the singer portrays Kṛṣṇa as no less vulnerable. He pines and wastes away at Rādhā's rejection of his apologies, even threatening suicide if she will not desist from her anger and accept him once again. Rādhā's friends take advantage of Kṛṣṇa's lovesick condition in order to make explicit comparisons between the two lovers, always at Kṛṣṇa's expense. Thus through constant comparisons Rādhā's superiority is easily established, particularly when such characterisation has religious sanction. In *Brahmavaivarta*,²² an early medieval *purāṇa* of Bengal, Kṛṣṇa unhesitatingly declares that Rādhā is his energy, his very life. In *padāvalī kīrtan* this theme is further developed and Kṛṣṇa is made to acknowledge Rādhā as his *guru* to whose feet he submits as a humble servant. Such characterisation is made by both men and women singers, but Donna Marie Wulff observes that when she compared the performances of women singers with those of men who narrated the same episodes, she found certain notable differences. First, the women singers seemed to take special delight in telling of Rādhā's triumph over Kṛṣṇa, lingering with obvious pleasure over episodes in which he falls at her feet or is humiliated by her friends. Second, and more significantly, only the women drew general principles from such instances, interpreting Rādhā's superiority in relation to the positions of men and women in society. In the course of her commentary, Wulff writes, one woman singer shifted from the term *nāyikā* (heroine) to *nārijāti* (a generic term for women), indicating that she is referring not simply to Rādhā, but rather to women generally.²³ This analysis of Wulff seems to be justified, in which case the place of women in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society acquires a special dimension. Sanyal emphasises the authority of the *mā-gonsāis* (women heads of Vaiṣṇava groups), but has not addressed himself to this question.

In a thought-provoking preface to the book, Gautam Bhadra has pointed out that although Sanyal refers to ecstatic dancing and singing, the book lacks the kind of analysis which is currently being done in anthropological research on the social significance of such acts in mystical religions.²⁴ The book certainly does not reflect an awareness of such concerns. In historical

²² *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, Panchanan Tarkaratna (ed.), Calcutta, 1332 B.S.

²³ Donna Marie Wulff, 'Images and Roles of Women in Bengali Vaiṣṇava Padāvalī Kīrtan', in Joseph T. O'Connell (ed.), *Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, Orientalism, Society and the Arts*, Asian Studies Centre, Michigan State University, Michigan, 1985, pp. 16–19.

²⁴ Gautam Bhadra, *Preface to Bāṅglā Kīrtaner Ithāsa*, pp. viii–ix.

research too, David Kinsley has described the life of Caitanya in terms of 'divine play' and analysed its significance, in connection with his discussion of *Kṛṣṇalīlā*,²⁵ a point which the author has not taken into cognisance. Recently June McDaniel has explored the central role of ecstasy in Bengali devotionalism. She argues that significant discrepancy exists between the expectations of religious tradition and the actual experiences of the worshippers. Theological texts emphasise the importance of ritual and meditation as a means of inducing ecstatic experience, but in practice the major function of ritual is to limit and control these states. In contrast, hagiographies written by devotees emphasise chaos and intensity. They indicate that ecstasy tends to occur spontaneously, which is far more desirable to the devotee.²⁶ Such researches definitely help to understand the ideology and the inner world of a people. We will not characterise the absence of such inquiry on the part of the author as exactly a deficiency of the book, for an analysis of this kind was not essential for his purpose. The author has concentrated on the structure of social organisation; others will look into the mentality that went with it.

One of the difficulties the author had to face in tracing the social implications of *kīrtan* is that it is much easier to find material for the theological backdrop of this essentially devotional genre of music than its social basis. The songs themselves provide no clue, as these are simple narrations of the endless cycle of joyous union and anxious separation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the theology they symbolise. They appeal to the fundamental emotions of the human mind; they inspire the participants and listeners to *bhakti* and not to united action, which may lead to rebellious disregard for and consequent reformulation of social norms. But the unique feature of *kīrtan* was that in its composition, exposition and appreciation it involved the entire rural community. Caitanya took advantage of this one expression of unity in village culture and transformed it into a platform of social congregation which contributed to collective strength, generating fearlessness, confidence and self-respect among the common people. The reconstruction of this subtle process of transformation depends mostly on indirect evidence and intuitive understanding rather than definitive facts. That is why the author had to grope cautiously in his effort to bring into relief the organisational aspect of *kīrtan* while he is explicit and comfortable with the theological aspect of it. Our emphasis on the author's treatment of the social significance of *kīrtan* has to be understood in view of this major constraint in the nature of his sources. Sanyal's achievement lies in recognising the fact of social cohesion that *kīrtan* eventually imparts to society,

²⁵ David R. Kinsley, *The Divine Player: A Study of Kṛṣṇa-Līlā*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1979.

²⁶ June McDaniel, *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989.

a fact which hitherto went unnoticed, and in refraining from making enthusiastic superficial claims of *kīrtan* being the mouthpiece of radical action.

Sanyal's primary object was to trace the evolution of Bengal's regional cultural identity, with the help of the Caitanyite *bhakti* movement and its prime instrument—*kīrtan*. He has achieved it with remarkable ease. The author is so committed to his two favourite topics—the rise and growth of Bengali culture in an all-India perspective and the strength of the popular culture of rural society in contrast to urban individualism, that in order to discover their sources he has, on the one hand, studied the texts with scrupulous care and has conducted extensive fieldwork, particularly in central and south Bengal, on the other. It is impossible to have minute knowledge of such apparently inconsequential information as the pond in which Caitanyadeva bathed and the tree under which he took temporary shelter in the course of his preaching, without direct familiarity with rural traditions. The author's sincerity of purpose is best reflected in his language; firm and lucid, his prose is entirely devoid of artificiality or emotionalism. *Bāṅglā Kīrtaner Itihāsa* is a blend of extensive scholarship, deep intellection and sensitive intuitive understanding.

Book Reviews

D.W. ATTWOOD and B.S. BAVISKAR (eds.), *Who Shares? Co-operatives and Rural Development*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, x + 432 pp., Rs. 250.

This book brings together papers presented at a symposium of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences on co-operatives and rural development held in Montreal in 1983. They report on the nature and functioning of numerous types of cooperative enterprises located in diverse social and ecological settings of developing countries of Asia and Africa.

Most of the papers in the volume seek to discover the secrets of successful cooperation either explicitly or implicitly. Why have some cooperatives succeeded eminently whereas most others have failed? Is it possible to replicate the successful cases? In answer, the message that comes through repeatedly is that success depends on a unique combination of factors that are obtained at the grassroots. Thus the paper on pastoralists demonstrates that pastoralism is sustained in a wide range of ecological settings. Consequently, the ecological constraints and the availability and access to productive resources differ in different regions. Accordingly the type of division of labour and teamwork requirements also differ widely from one community to another. Hence the type of cooperative enterprise that succeeds in one community may not necessarily be suited to the needs of another community. Besides, the social institutions vary widely across communities and since cooperative institutions have to adapt themselves to these institutions as well, there cannot be a single formula for success.

It follows from the above conclusion that there cannot be one policy package towards cooperatives. Yet, several national and international policy-making institutions support policy packages that seemingly replicate the success cases. One prominent instance of such a case is the dairy development policy in India based on what is known as the 'Amul pattern'. This policy is not only backed by the Indian government but has also received the support of the World Bank which comes in for trenchant criticism in Shanti George's paper. She demonstrates that the 'Amul pattern' that is advocated is quite different from the model of the dairy cooperative that became justly famous throughout the world. She also shows that the 'Amul

pattern' that is propagated has not actually succeeded as envisaged by the policy-makers.

The aversion towards policy packages, however, does not preclude the advocacy of broad guidelines for the development of cooperatives. In fact, the case studies strongly indicate the need for such guidelines. They show that a top-down or 'blueprint' approach which seeks to impose designs worked out at policy-making centres never works. According to Goran Hyden it is the 'greenhouse' approach that works. This approach encourages self-help institutions at the grassroots and supports them so that they can gradually develop into cooperatives. This strategy recognises the inherent strength and dynamism of indigenous institutions of informal cooperation. The cases of successful cooperatives discussed in this book amply support this position. In each case, the cooperative was built up on local enterprise and on indigenous social institutions.

Several papers in this book explore the nature of indigenous institutions which promote cooperation. The institution of exchange labour among farmers in the Philippines, rotating credit associations of Africa, the complex division of labour that obtains among the pastoralist Yarahmadzai of Iranian Baluchistan are a few of the cases discussed. Drawing attention to such institutions in the Indian context Attwood points out that such instances of informal cooperation depict 'selective negotiated alliances' which can occur across class and caste barriers. But not all such instances make for successful cooperation. For that to happen, such alliances should be seen as benefiting all concerned. This is of course a perceptive observation but it does not go far enough. Michael Levin in his paper quoting R.P. Dore argues that to convert such alliances into durable cooperative structures, the mutual trust and loyalty in the informal cooperative institutions should be combined with institutional suspicion based on rational-legal demarcation and delegation of powers and on rationalised accounting procedures. This task is difficult to achieve in developing countries because traditional concepts of trust and group loyalty prevent the growth of rational legal structures of institutionalised suspicion. Hence many cooperative enterprises have failed in these countries. In view of this fact, it is necessary to consider the few rare cases of successful cooperatives which have managed to achieve such a combination of organisational features. There are a few papers which provide some factual information suggesting the criticality of leadership style and ideology in the innovative creation of modern cooperative enterprises.

The cultural dimensions of cooperation are relatively neglected because the contributors are mainly concerned with interests rather than ideas and with the social structural aspects of cooperation. Though successful cooperatives may be based on traditional institutional principles, they nevertheless represent innovative attempts at cultural reconstruction.

The cooperative movement originated in Europe to ameliorate the evils of private property and capitalist exploitation. Cooperatives were seen as a socialist intervention in the capitalist system to reduce social inequalities. The available evidence in this book show that cooperatives have not necessarily reduced inequalities. They suggest instead that cooperatives are gradually transforming themselves into private corporate enterprises. Surely, this movement from cooperativism to corporatism needed more attention from the contributors to this volume.

The criticisms levelled above are themselves inspired by the rich body of facts that the book provides. This book, which successfully launches a remarkable academic cooperative venture marks an important intellectual landmark in the sociology of development and cooperation. It will continue to be an important reference book to social scientists, development experts and the theoreticians and practitioners of cooperation.

M.N. Panini

Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

BRAJADULAL CHATTOPADHYAYA, *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India*, Calcutta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar Lectures on Indian History and Culture, 1985), 1990, 131 pp., Rs. 50.

Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya's *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India* shows how the inscriptions of early medieval India can yield important evidence relating to rural history provided the right kinds of questions are addressed to them. Chattopadhyaya examines epigraphic data on the nature of rural settlements from three regions—Bengal, south-east Marwar in Rajasthan, and south Karnataka. One of the specific issues he examines is the regional variation in access to and utilisation of water resources. In this matter, he skilfully elicits information from the boundary description sections of the inscriptions. The relationship between rural society and the state is a problem of more general importance that he keeps in the forefront. Chattopadhyaya accompanies his discussion of these issues with a highlighting of the problems involved in utilising epigraphic evidence for the reconstruction of Indian rural history and a sensitivity to the intricacies of unravelling the nuances of the epigraphic technical vocabulary. He is swift to admit the inadequacy or limitations of the testimony of the epigraphic sources on certain counts.

Chattopadhyaya's analysis of the epigraphic evidence from Bengal suggests villages of the nucleated type, connected with each other both spatially and socially, while his examination of the references to the composition of

supra-village and village-level bodies such as the *grāmāṣṭakulādhikaraṇa* and the *adhikaraṇas* indicates important changes in the relationship between local communities and the state in the post-Gupta period. The case study of rural settlements and rural society in the kingdom of the Nadol *Cāhamānas* in south-east Marwar examines the relationship between villages and their 'nodes', and the role played by the Nadol *Cāhamāna* polity in the distribution and transferring of rural resources. The case study of the village Kalikaṭṭi in Karnataka is particularly interesting as it traces the history of village through its transition from an ordinary village settlement to the status of an *agrahāra*. Chattopadhyaya exercises a great degree of caution in making general pronouncements on the basis of these three case studies. This is because of the great degree of chronological and regional variations in the evidence yielded by inscriptions belonging to different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Furthermore, there is also the fact that the epigraphic evidence is more forthcoming on atypical village settlements—the *brahmadeyas* and *devadeyas*.

Chattopadhyaya points out that Brāhmaṇa-peasant polarity which the proponents of Indian feudalism speak of and the Brāhmaṇa-peasant alliance of the proponents of the segmentary state model have much in common. Both these schools view rural communities as relatively self-sufficient isolated entities, which were jolted into change and infused with the element of social polarisation and tension by the phenomenon of royal land grants. According to Chattopadhyaya, the sort of en bloc identification of the main players (donees, village groups, autonomously organised agrarian units, the state) in these hypotheses is simplistic, ignoring as it does differences within rural society, as also other possible areas of social tension—for instance, among Brāhmaṇas, between Brāhmaṇas and temples, and among secular landholders. This book shows how a careful reading of early medieval inscriptions can yield a picture of rural society that is both more complex and indicative of significant change, especially in the nature of the linkages between rural society and the early medieval state. It adds another dimension to the author's important contribution to the debate on the nature of the political and social order in early medieval India.

Upinder Singh
St. Stephen's College
Delhi

SANDRIA B. FREITAG (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment 1800–1980*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.

This book edited by Freitag presents a selection of the work now being

undertaken on the themes of community and identity, the range of meanings which can be read from symbolic actions in public spaces, and the environmental context of culture. The editorial outlines recent debates in European history on popular culture and social control, and stresses the importance of developing a historically dynamic approach, avoiding a priori assumptions of an elite-popular or elite-subaltern dichotomy. The argument is that elite and popular values may overlap, co-exist or diverge at particular historical conjunctures, that cultural symbols appropriate or shed meanings as various participants adjust relationships between themselves.

The promise of this approach is evident in such enjoyable contributions as Lutgendorf's article on the performance traditions of the *katha*, Hansen's which sets out to recover the traditions of popular theatre, and King's, on the cultural arenas which shaped the emergence of a sanskritised Hindi. Shifts in the milieu, patronage and technologies of particular performance genres are taken up to analyse changes in the culture of production and consumption associated with it. King traces the formation of a new linguistic identity through processes based on a divergence between elite and popular culture and the clustering of this identity with other symbols associated with a communal opposition. David Arnold sketches out the conceptual gulf between colonial and indigenous perceptions of disease and healing. Perhaps a further exploration of the issues at stake in this cultural divide—cost, taxation, professional status, conceptions of the public and the private or the familial—will emerge in further work.

Where some of the articles tend to flag is in a sustained exploration of issues of power and conflict involved in the very constitution of 'public arenas', the possibility of hierarchical or communally regulated access to spheres which seem very open, and the tension of alternative 'public arenas' posed conceptually or in reality. As defined by Freitag, the term 'public arenas' refers to 'activities which represent collective values and notions'. Lutgendorf, Hansen, and Marcus, treat it as a performance space open to both elite and popular strata.

However Hansen does note that women and sometimes young boys were excluded from public events of a secular character. So even popular entertainments can have 'moral' parameters. Nor is it self-evident that the pleasures of transgression are inherently threatening to social authority if experienced in a conceptual space understood as entertainment. Hansen's explanation for elite withdrawal from *svang* performances—that the looseness and spontaneity of entertainment made it a threatening arena for the inversion of authority—needs to be pressed further. Can changes in elite sensibilities be understood only as reflexive responses to social threat? Perhaps elite withdrawal was also due to a new reluctance to be seen to succumb to the erotic enticement of *svang*. Without a consideration of questions of power and forms of cultural communication, the elite may

seem to display a rather atavistic urge to 'sanitise and sanskritise'. The alternative forums for cultural and moral leadership will have to be explored.

Freitag places elite withdrawal from 'public arenas' in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. But Hansen's work shows that this 'withdrawal' is never uncomplicated. Though she states that theatre came to be an 'unabashed arena of instruction', yet earlier she had pointed out that Bharatendu Harishchandra too had had to make concessions to the demands of popular taste. In the case of elite 'withdrawal' from *biraha* performances (Marcus), it would be interesting to assess the play of elite and popular tastes as such songs began to be relayed through film, television, and radio.

Nita Kumar explores the importance of perceptions of work and leisure to the identity of the Muslim weavers of Banaras and the significance of the neighbourhood, the *mohulla*, in their public life. However, the threat of forces which disrupt this self-representation—poverty, market fluctuation, debt and migration—invite consideration. What was the fate of the community world-view when weavers had to leave their looms, *mohullas* and Banaras for the factories of Bombay? Coccari shows how rural guardian deities could form foci for struggles over land claims in an urban context. But does this transposition of rural deities to an urban context represent the penetration of a rural world-view? Some assessment of the difference in the social hierarchies at play is required.

Most importantly, Freitag's proposition of a separation between the world of colonial state institutions and the world of 'public arenas' is difficult to accept. The institutions of state had to communicate authority and legitimacy and also certain objectives of government to the indigenous population, and to do so it had to use cultural material from Indian society. It had to graft new meanings to symbols familiar to Indians, and to re-situate these symbols within their institutions. The process was not always one attended with success; the play of meanings around such symbols as the state adopted could be very ambiguous. But the civic, military, revenue-collecting and penal processes of the colonial state did not take shape in isolation or autonomy from existing 'public arenas'. For instance, the officers of the Company's regiments used to participate in the festivals and celebrations of their sepoys. However from the 1830s there was an active controversy in official circles about 'giving countenance' to 'idolatrous ceremonies', about regulating performances of *sati*, about the use of certain forms of religious oath in court, and other such issues related to the cultural components of 'public authority'.

In Banaras the Company claimed prestige by virtue of the protection it extended to the sacred city of the Hindus. But this acknowledgement of a special status for the city could also be cited back to government when it imposed unpopular measures. I would argue that it was this situation which the Banaras Rajas exploited to entrench their indispensability to the

ceremonial life of the city. Lutgendorf and Freitag argue that this role originated in the Raj's effort to secure ideological and political independence from the Muslim Nawabs of Awadh. But this statement is based on references which date from the late eighteenth century at the earliest. However, by 1775 the zamindari was entirely within the tributary ambit of the Company.

Freitag contends that shifts in the relationship between communities in Banaras can be deduced from their actions as read from the administrative accounts of two protest movements over the period 1809–1811. But deductions over such a short span can skate on thin ice in the matter of references. The statement that symbolic actions indicate the 'new' claims made by Marathas and Rajputs in the face of the 'decline' of the Banaras Raja is a case in point. The position of the Banaras Raja in 'public arenas' under Company rule has to be examined as a complex reorientation. The authority of the Banaras Raja rested not only on his role in the 'public arenas' of the city but also on the special privileges he obtained in his 'Family Domains' and on his extensive zamindari holdings in the other districts. Freitag's reference to changes in *tahsildari* arrangements as an index of the Raja's decline is particularly inappropriate because the Raja continued to exercise civil and revenue jurisdiction in his 'Family Domains', and to wield influence in police appointments there. Nor are the 'new' claims of the Marathas and Rajputs as against the Banaras Raja established by the references. In fact, the activities of these groups may indicate a contestation of the new standards of 'public order' being imposed by the Company in the city. (Freitag's proposition that widespread religious construction in Banaras was possible because 'much' of the religious architecture of the city had been razed by Aurangzeb, is another instance of references which glance off the target. The supporting footnote refers to Blake's article on Aurangzeb's father, Shahjahan, to an injunction to build mosques wherever there were Muslims.)

Finally, it would have been illuminating to explore the tension between Freitag's arguments about the particularity of Banaras, resting on the cultural homogeneity imparted by collaboration between the Raja, the Gosains and the merchants, and the plural sources of cultural identity emerging in the work of other contributors. This collection therefore offers an engaging array of themes and issues, a welcome augury of a new and productive phase in the writing of Indian cultural history.

Radhika Singha

A.K. JAIN and P. VISARIA (eds.), *Infant Mortality in India: Differentials and Determinants*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1988, 404 pp., Rs. 225.

With increasing interest in better indicators of the quality of life than mere

income, the Infant Mortality Rate has come into its own. The present book is an attempt to document our knowledge about this variable in India—its levels over time, differentials and determinants. Consisting of 14 papers presented at a seminar on the subject organised by the Gujarat Institute of Area Planning, Ahmedabad and the Population Council, New York, the book particularly tries to clarify the debate about the role of medical services versus socioeconomic factors in the control of infant deaths. Expectedly, the final conclusion on this issue is mixed—both factors are important and shore each other up so that their joint effect is often more than additive.

The first chapter, by the editors of the volume, provides an excellent summary not only of the book itself, but also of the state-of-art of the subject as a whole. In particular, their harping on cultural or non-medical attitudes and practices as inadequately researched determinants of infant mortality needs to be taken seriously. The other impressive contribution of this chapter is the insights it gleans from the remaining chapters on the methodological problems encountered in empirically studying infant mortality and its determinants. While these problems are discussed specifically in the chapters by Srinivasan and by Nag, several of the papers on substantive findings also face these questions of interpretation, comparability and spurious relationships. The introductory chapter therefore does well to highlight these issues in a nutshell.

The papers themselves, we are informed, have been heavily revised since the original seminar. This is reflected in the qualitative difference between this book and several more hastily produced conference proceedings. My only regret is that the seminar was confined to infant mortality; it is becoming increasingly evident that early childhood mortality (that is, mortality up to the age of five) may be a more robust indicator of development, and of the environmental and behavioural influences on health and mortality.

Alaka M. Basu

Institute of Economic Growth
Delhi

GEETANJALI PANDEY, *Between Two Worlds: An Intellectual Biography of Premchand*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1989, 225 pp., Rs. 140.

Geetanjali Pandey's book focuses on ideological contradictions in Premchand's writings. It tries to present him as a confused and vacillating middle class intellectual. Dr. Pandey insists that these contradictions represent the typical contradictions of his age, particularly of the nationalist, educated, urban middle class. Hindi critics also discussed the ideological contradictions of Premchand. But the credit of doing such a systematic

study goes to Dr. Pandey. There are two reasons for this. One is the conceptual framework which Dr. Pandey derives from the recent trend of subaltern historiography. The other reason is that the author is free from the typical reverential attitude which most of the Hindi critics have towards great writers like Premchand. On the other hand Dr. Pandey suffers from another weakness. She stresses the ideological contradictions of Premchand while underestimating the strength of the art of realism in his writing, and lacks sufficient understanding of literature which is necessary to appreciate literary writings.

Dr. Pandey's main argument—inspired by the subaltern view of history—is that, in his writings, Premchand never shows peasant leaders as emerging from among the peasantry itself, that they always come from outside. She faults the writer for doing this at a time when, according to her, the peasantry was producing its own leaders from among itself. She mentions the examples of Baba Ramachandra and Sahajanand Saraswati. But did these leaders really emerge from among the peasantry? The fact is that Baba Ramachandra was never a peasant. He was from outside this class and the local peasant leaders had invited him to lead their struggle. Even though he later integrated fully with this social group, he, along with other peasants, continued to invite nationalist, educated, urban middle class leaders to lead the peasantry. Similarly, Sahajanand Saraswati was merely born in a peasant family. His education, training, and occupation were never those of a peasant.

Further, Dr. Pandey argues that, although he was critical towards the existing middle class nationalist movement, Premchand failed to visualise any alternative to it. Was there really an alternative nationalist movement at that time which others were able to identify? The question is neither raised nor answered.

These two examples show how the subaltern historiography is over-simplified in this book. As a consequence, she makes suggestions which subaltern historians themselves have denied (see Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies-I*).

Just as Dr. Pandey's approach is ahistorical, it is also lacking in any profound literary insight. She looks in literature for answers to social questions, and is unable to explain satisfactorily as to why those works of Premchand which only pose problems are better and more effective than the ones which try to prescribe answers.

In discussing Premchand's contradictions, she is unable to see these contradictions in the totality of Premchand's writings. Often, she merely lists these contradictions and presents them as a charge-sheet against the writer—which is an entirely different project from the study and analysis of a writer's ideological position. On the issues of women, Harijans and communalism, she often projects Premchand's ideas out of context and in a biased and ahistorical manner.

Dr. Pandey is right in saying that nowhere in his writing does Premchand show a successful peasant struggle defeating the landlord class. This is an

important observation which the Hindi critics of Premchand hesitate to articulate. However, the book is marred by some serious distortions of facts. In the context of peasant-landlord relations, she argues that Premchand's works strengthen the position of the landlord class in society. She also says that in *Premashram* the peasants do not fight, and Manohar and Quadir remain resigned to their fate. We are further told that, in the same novel, Vidya worships her wily and corrupt husband. None of these is correct.

All this makes the book a misreading of Premchand.

Vir Bharat Talwar

Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

G. RODGERS, ed., *Population Growth and Poverty in Rural South Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 249 pp., 1989, Rs. 195.

This book is the outcome of a study prepared for the International Labour Office within the framework of the World Employment Programme. It consists of five empirical studies of population and poverty in the rural areas of four countries in South Asia—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Using a variety of approaches based on data availability and the authors' own inclinations, these studies try to understand some of the complex interactions between population growth and poverty in this region. The editor's difficulty in summarising the studies is a welcome admission of the nasty web of possible connections—to begin with, population growth and poverty seem to simultaneously affect and be affected by one another. Then, these effects are greatly conditioned by exogenous institutions and norms. And finally, many of the relationships are indirect rather than direct and socio-biological (that is involuntary) rather than actively behavioural.

But the single-most noteworthy and consistent finding is a negative one—the virtual absence of any support for the thesis that the 'poorest breed the fastest'. Case study after case study in this volume is faced with the finding that household size is smaller among the poorest groups—agricultural labourers as opposed to small landowners in India for example, and the smallest landowners as compared to the slightly better off in Bangladesh. And nor does the other side of the neo-Malthusian equation stand close scrutiny—the Bihar study underscores the negligible effect of an additional child on most household poverty indicators. The Bangladesh study is bolder still and suggests that in fact among the smallest landholders, land gains tend to be greater for those with larger families. But it is of course true at the same time that such household level relationships are a classic case of the micro and macro pictures conflicting—at an aggregate level, population growth rates are undoubtedly an important factor in the

steady decline in the size of inherited plots—a case of the simplest population growth effect on poverty when the numerator (in this case, land) is fixed and the denominator rises.

The policy implications of all this are naturally confusing and to me the book's greatest virtue is in its acceptance of this fact. Neither the editor, nor any of the authors, go out of their way to suggest simple interventions as the answer to the whirlpool that is being created from the South Asian combination of poverty and numbers. Some other international agencies are less cautious.

Alaka M. Basu

Institute of Economic Growth
Delhi

MANJIT SINGH, *The Political Economy of Unorganised Industry: A Study of the Labour Process*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, 236 pp., Rs. 190.

The first half of this book talks about labour process theory and industrialisation, three chapters in the middle report on the author's survey of woollen hosiery in Ludhiana, and the last two chapters write a history of trade unionism in the town. Each section is in itself useful, but the three things do not tie up very well and can be read separately. Here we will concentrate on the second part, for mainly that defines the significance of the book.

The survey of hosiery is informative, insightful, and worth summarising. It can be seen as a case study in subcontracting. Hosiery started in Ludhiana by catering to civil and defence needs, but from the mid-fifties was exporting abroad. Later this segment grew very rapidly. The industry has three layers, export firms, subcontractors, and workers. The first controls trade, but the last two own or rent in the simpler tools, so control and ownership of capital can be distinct. There is a persistent excess demand for labour, met by migration. Migrants and locals are unequal by the work they do, by their rural or urban origin, by social and educational status, and so, by wages. There is also considerable labour-turnover varying with processes and workers. Sometimes workers become employers, but what decides who will move up? The answer to this is incomplete; in general the book does not describe capitalists in enough detail.

Briefly on technology: In Ludhiana knitting is done on hand-frames, but in processing power-driven machines are replacing labour. This, like several other points, is a feature of many textile industries where processing is otherwise done by women and children. The heavier cloth made in Ludhiana explains the stability of hand-knitting. But it does not explain the instability of hand-processing. Did machines become cheaper? Or, did opportunity cost of domestic labour increase?

Throughout, the book talks about a tendency to subcontracting, decentralisation, large units breaking up or putting out work to small. Hosiery is surely one of many cases in India where this happens. A system as widespread and stable as putting-out raises two types of analytical problems. First, one needs to understand it as a flexible, if implicit, contract. The book does many things with putting-out—compare it with early modern Britain, find appropriate names for it, explain it as employers' move to shift risks or save on labour and space—all this is interesting but does not quite explain what it is. The second problem decentralisation raises is dynamic, the link between firm size and growth. Like powerlooms in weaving, growth in hosiery seems to depend on the labour market. Also, successful capitalists appear in towns like Surat or Ludhiana more than elsewhere. One expects a study in industrial history to tell us what institutions make this kind of capitalism work better in certain places. But the book is set in a framework where capitalists are only exploiters, so this question does not get addressed.

Tirthankar Roy
Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research
Bombay

Book Notices

S. MEHROTRA, *India and the Soviet Union: trade and technology transfer*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, xiv + 242pp., £30.

The book is based on the author's Ph.D. thesis completed in 1985. Circumstances, more than the subject matter of the book, have since caused it to be targeted at the economic history market. The first part of the book is largely about non-economic factors in Indo-Soviet economic relations. The chapter on technology transfer in the second part and the two chapters on trade and payments in the third form the core of the book. They make interesting reading but there is rather more description based on official publications and current periodical and secondary literature (all in English) than serious analysis. Anyone looking to the book to shed some light on the many hidden areas of trade between the two countries is bound to be disappointed. Despite the book's early obsolescence, those interested in Indo-Soviet relations may find it of interest.

APARNA BASU and BHARATI RAY, *Women's Struggle, A History of the All India Women's Conference 1927-1990*, Manohar, Delhi, 1990, xi + 206 pp., Rs. 210.

This is a factual account of the All India Women's Conference's activities before and after independence. The purpose of the book is to remind the 'younger generation' of the historical roots of the women's movement in India, the fruits of which have been the right to vote, Lady Irwin College, Sarojini House, the exclusion of female labour from mines, the prevention of traffic in women and children, propaganda against purdah and dowry, the Family Planning Association, the Mahila Printing Press and the smokeless chulha. The book includes a useful set of appendices.

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Volume XXIX

Number 1

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Contents

BISWAMOY PATI The Climax of Popular Protest:

The Quit India Movement in Orissa

NITA KUMAR Class and Gender Politics in the Ramlila

RALPH SHLOMOWITZ and LANCE BRENNAN Mortality and Indian
Labour in Malaya, 1877–1933

RANABIR SAMADDAR Reflections in another mirror:

Fictional Genealogies of Chilkigarh

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IMPERIALISM AND MEDICINE IN BENGAL

A Socio-Historical Perspective

POONAM BALA

This book assesses the impact of imperial policies on the medical profession in Bengal during colonial rule and covers the period 1800–1947. The period under study is one in which Western medical science was changing rapidly and becoming increasingly professional. The attempt to impose a similar pattern on the Indian systems of medicine led eventually to a conflict of interest between the two, instead of the peaceful co-existences which had prevailed at first. By the end of the nineteenth century, advances in Western medicine had undermined and eroded the similarities in approach and practice which had earlier made extensive cooperation at least a possibility.

A book which will command attention not only in departments of medicine but also among anthropologists, historians, political scientists and sociologists.

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SAGE PUBLICATIONS

New Delhi ■ Newbury Park ■ London

Index to Volume XXVIII

- Alam Muzaffar:** Eastern India in the early eighteenth century 'crisis' Some evidence from Bihar (pp. 43–71).
- Baker, David:** State policy, the market economy, and tribal decline: The Central Provinces, 1861–1920 (pp. 341–370).
- Bouillier, Veronique.** Growth and decay of a Kanphata Yogi monastery in south-west Nepal (pp. 151–170).
- Das, Keshabananda:** Growth and decline of the mica mining industry in Nellore, 1911–1950 (pp. 393–416).
- Dyson, Tim and Arup Maharatna:** Excess mortality during the Bengal famine: A re-evaluation (pp. 281–297).
- Ganesh, K.N.:** Ownership and control of land in medieval Kerala. *Janmam-kanam* relations during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (pp. 299–325).
- Ghosh, Papiya:** The making of the Congress Muslim stereotype: Bihar 1937–39 (pp. 417–434).
- Goswami, Onkar and Aseem Shrivastava:** Commercialisation of Indian agriculture, 1900–1940: What do supply response functions say? (pp. 229–259).
- Guha, Sumit:** Mortality decline in early twentieth century India: A preliminary enquiry (pp. 371–391).
- Gupta, Samita:** Sris Chandra Chatterjee: The quest for a national architecture (pp. 187–201).
- Mohapatra, P.P.:** Class conflict and agrarian regimes in Chotanagpur, 1860–1950 (pp. 1–42).
- Pathak, Shekhar:** The *begar* abolition movement in British Kumaun (pp. 261–279).
- Rajasekhar, D:** Famines and peasant mobility: Changing agrarian structure in Kurnool district of Andhra, 1870–1900 (pp. 121–150).
- Reddy, M. Atchi:** Work and leisure: Daily working hours of agricultural labourers, Nellore district, 1860–1989 (pp. 73–95).
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay:** A note on some early nineteenth century *inam* records in the Karnataka (pp. 435–443).
- Thomaz, Luis Filipe F.R.:** Factions, interests and messianism: The politics of Portuguese expansions in the East, 1500–1521 (pp. 97–109).
- Vasudevan, Ravi:** The cultural space of a film narrative: Interpreting *Kismet* (Bombay Talkies, 1943) (pp. 171–185).

REVIEW ARTICLE

- Chakrabarti, Kunal:** *Kirtan* and social organisation in medieval Bengal (pp. 435–461)

BOOK REVIEWS

- Athreya, V.B., G. Djurfeldt and S. Lindberg: *Barriers Broken Production Relations and Agrarian Change in Tamil Nadu*, by **Madura Swaminathan** (pp. 203–205)
- Attwood, D.W. and B.S. Baviskar eds.: *Who Shares? Co-operatives and Rural Development*, by **M.N. Panini** (pp. 463–465).
- Bagchi, Amiya: *The Presidency Banks and the Indian Economy 1876–1914*, by **S. Ambirajan** (pp. 111–114).
- Breman, Jan: *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia*, by **Rana P. Behal** (pp. 205–208).
- Chattopadhyaya, Brajadulal: *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India*, by **Uplinder Singh** (pp. 465–466)

- Coulson, Michael: *Mālan Mādhavam*, by Ashutosh Dayal Mathur (pp. 208–209)
- Crooke, William A *Glossary of North Indian Peasant Life*, ed., Shahid Amin, by Gyan Prakash (pp. 325–326).
- Davenport-Hines, R.P.T. and Geoffery Jones eds. *British Business in Asia since 1860*, by G. Balachandran (pp. 330–332).
- Diamond, Larry, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset eds.: *Democracy in Asia*, by Niraja Gopal Jayal (pp. 332–333).
- Frankel, Francine and M.S.A. Rao eds.: *Dominance and State Power in Modern India, Volume I*, by Oliver Mendelshon (pp. 115–116)
- Frietag, Sandria B. ed.: *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment 1800–1980*, by Radhika Singha (pp. 467–469).
- Gold, Daniel: *The Lord as Guru: Hindi Sants in the North Indian Tradition*, by Ravinder Kaur (p. 327).
- Gough, Kathleen: *Rural Social Change in Southeast India, 1950s to 1980s*, by T.K. Sundari (pp. 211–213)
- Guha, Ramachandra: *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, by Jacques Pouchepadass (pp. 213–216).
- Guha, Ranajit, ed.: *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society: Volumes V and VI*, by Ramachandra Guha (pp. 116–119)
- Hasan, Zoya: *Dominance and Mobilisation: Rural Politics in Western U.P. 1930–80*, by Purnima Roy (p. 217).
- Henningham, Stephen: *A Great Estate and its Landlords in Colonial India: Darbhanga 1860–1942*, by Peter Robb (pp. 328–330).
- Jain, A.K. and P. Visariya eds.: *Infant Mortality in India: Differentials and Determinants*, by Alaka M. Basu (pp. 469–470).
- Kanchan, R.K.: *Hindu Kingdoms of South-East Asia*, by Kunal Chakrabarti (p. 333).
- Kantak, M.R. ed.: *First Anglo-Maratha War: The Last Phase (1780–83)*, by Sumit Guha (p. 218).
- Kolff, Dirk H.A.: *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, by Stewart Gordon (pp. 334–335)
- Macleod, D.N.: *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, by André Wink (pp. 218–220).
- Nayar, Baldev Raj: *India's Mixed Economy: The Role of Ideology and Interests in its Development*, by P.N. Dhar (pp. 336–337).
- Pandey, Geetanjali: *Between Two Worlds: An Intellectual Biography of Premchand*, by Vir Bharat Talwar (pp. 470–472).
- Panikkar, K.N. ed.: *Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar*, by K. Gopalankutty (pp. 220–221).
- Rich, Paul B.: *Race and Empire in British Politics*, by Paratha Sarathi Gupta (pp. 338–339).
- Rodgers, G. ed.: *Population Growth and Poverty in Rural South Asia*, by Alaka M. Basu (p. 472).
- Saxena, R.K.: *The Army of the Rajputs (A study of 18th century Rajputana)*, by S. Inayet A. Zaidi (pp. 224–227)
- Sen, Amartya: *Commodities and Capabilities and The Standard of Living*, by Suresh Tendulkar (p. 340).
- Singh, Manjit: *The Political Economy of the Unorganised Industry: A Study of the Labour Process*, by Tirthankar Roy (pp. 473–474).
- Stein, Burton: *Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire*, by David Ludden (pp. 222–223).
- Tyabji, Nasir: *The Small Industries Policy in India*, by Tirthankar Roy (pp. 223–224)
- Von Furer-Haimendorf, Christopher: *Life Among Indian Tribes: The autobiography of an anthropologist*, by K.S. Singh (pp. 209–211).